

Israel reaffirms crack-down policy

TEL AVIV (AP) — Israel's defence cabinet Sunday reaffirmed its policy on expulsions, house demolitions and denying entry permits to stem an upsurge in the Palestinian uprising. Israel Radio said. The cabinet secretary's office declined comment on the report and the radio said Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir asked the ministers not to discuss the decisions. The ministers approved the expulsion of Palestinians and destroying Palestinian homes, the radio said. The defence cabinet also approved continued limitations on entry permits for Palestinians and prohibited Arabs from using their private cars to enter the Jewish state. Mr. Shamir's 14-member defence cabinet started discussing these measures last Wednesday after assailants stabbed six Israelis to death over the past month. The United States and international human rights groups have protested Israel's policy of expelling Palestinians, saying it violates international conventions on dealing with people under occupation. Four Palestinians from the Gaza Strip are currently appealing expulsion orders. The practice of destroying homes of Palestinian activists has also drawn criticism from the West as collective punishment.

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Afghan rebels say garrison town taken

ISLAMABAD (R) — Western-backed Afghan rebels said they had Sunday captured the government garrison town of Khost, which has been under siege for most of the 12 years of the Afghan war. They said the town fell at the climax of a two-week offensive. The Kabul government said the rebels were helped by Pakistani troops, but Pakistan denied the charge. No independent confirmation of the guerrilla report was immediately available. If confirmed, it would be the first major victory by the Mujahedeen guerrillas since they captured Tarin Kot, capital of Uruzgan province in central Afghanistan, last year.

Iran wants envoys to visit Khoei

NICOSIA (R) — Iran protested to Iraq Sunday about treatment of its nationals there and asked for permission to send a delegation to visit the Muslim World's most senior Shiite scholar, who it claims is under house arrest. The Iranian news agency IRNA said Iraqi Charge d'Affaires Fakhri Hamoud Al Dulaimi had been summoned to the Foreign Ministry a day after President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani urged Iraq to "free" Grand Ayatollah Abolqasem Al Khoei. Mr. Dulaimi heard a protest about the "Baghdad government's mistreatment of Iranian nationals in Iraq particularly Grand Ayatollah Khoei and other (Muslim scholars)," IRNA added. Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Legal and Consular Affairs Mojtaba Mir-mahdi sought permission for an Iranian delegation to travel to Iraq to meet Ayatollah Khoei.

French soldier killed in S. Arabia

PARIS (AP) — A French soldier was killed in an explosion in northern Saudi Arabia, a Defence Ministry official said Sunday. Gerard Sudre, a non-commissioned officer, was handling an unidentified device when it blew up Saturday, the official said. Sudre was evacuated to a French military hospital in the Saudi capital of Riyadh, but died the same day, said the official.

Tunisian group prepares manifesto

TUNIS (R) — A moderate splinter group from Tunisia's main Islamic movement is preparing the manifesto for a new political organisation, a leading member said in an interview published Sunday. Sheikh Abdul Fattah Mourou, who suspended his membership of the Nahdha movement earlier this month, told the government newspaper Al Sahafa that the new movement would try to draw a line between religion and politics.

Khaleda Zia to visit S. Arabia, Kuwait

DHAKA (AP) — Prime Minister Khaleda Zia will make an official visit to Saudi Arabia and Kuwait in April, a Foreign Ministry official said Sunday. It will be Mrs. Zia's first trip abroad since her Bangladesh Nationalist Party swept last month's parliamentary elections. Mrs. Zia, who took office on March 20, is the first woman prime minister of predominantly Muslim Bangladesh. The official said the government is finalising the schedule for Mrs. Zia's visit. He said she would leave after the 'Eid.

Withdrawal continues

RIYADH (AP) — The U.S. is withdrawing about 5,000 troops a day from the Gulf region while awaiting a permanent ceasefire with Iraq, military sources said Sunday. More than a fourth of the U.S. troops in the region have returned home and the number of soldiers remaining has dropped to under 400,000 from a peak of 540,000, the U.S. central command said. But the U.S. VII corps, with almost 100,000 troops, is still in occupied Iraq. Officials have said it will remain there until the United Nations approves a formal ceasefire, which could come as early as this week.

Iraq says Dohuk and Erbil retaken

Combined news agency dispatches

IRAQ SAID Sunday that it had recaptured the provincial capitals of Erbil and Dohuk from Kurdish insurgents. The Iraqi News Agency (INA) said its correspondent in the area reported "the saboteurs have fled towards the mountains, leaving behind them their weapons and supplies."

Kurdish rebels said Iraqi forces trying to retake the two provincial capitals pounded them Sunday with artillery, helicopter gunships and warplanes. Iraq said its forces were greeted by singing, cheering people.

"The people of Dohuk and Erbil received our armed forces with national songs and cheering President Saddam Hussein..." INA said. Tens of thousands of people have fled the Iraqi shelling in Dohuk. Western journalists said Saturday that Kurdish guerrillas made up nearly all the people left in the city 50 kilometres south of

(Continued on page 3)

Iraqis take journalists to rebel-free Kirkuk

NICOSIA (R) — Western reporters visited the northern Iraqi oil city of Kirkuk Sunday and found it firmly in government hands. Cable News Network (CNN) reported.

Television pictures from Kirkuk showed damaged buildings, several bodies in a road, burned out cars and a truckload of cheerful Iraqi government soldiers. A local official told CNN's correspondent about 25 people died in the battle for the city. Kurdish rebels captured Kirkuk, in mid-March. Baghdad announced its recapture on Thursday but rebel spokesmen abroad claimed fighting continued.

Edward Stourton of Britain's Independent Television News (ITN), also reporting from Kirkuk, said: "We toured enough of the town today to be able to say with some confidence that the government's forces now control it again."

He said journalists neither heard nor saw anything to indicate that fighting was continuing. Provincial governor Hashim Hassan Al Majid told reporters there were few casualties in the battle because the rebels had been defeated within two hours.

"After a short time they ran away, fleeing outside the city like rats," Mr. Majid said. Mr. Stourton said bodies filmed in a road had been so badly burnt that it was difficult to say whether they were rebels or loyalists, soldiers or civilians.

Hammadi pledges to implement reform

NICOSIA (Agencies) — Iraqi Prime Minister Saddam Hussein has pledged that his government would work for political reform after it crushed a rebellion against the government of President Saddam Hussein.

But in his first major policy speech since his appointment last week, Dr. Hammadi said democracy could only be built upon respect for law — an apparent reference to the turmoil in Iraq after the Gulf war.

"The present government...will undertake completing the setting up of democratic institutions in all fields, especially matters upon which our political system is based — the constitution, party, information and institutions," he said in a speech carried by Baghdad Radio.

Dr. Hammadi also pledged his government would begin an era of reconstruction to repair the "not insignificant" damage caused by the U.S.-led coalition in the Gulf war.

Describing the Kurds rebelling in northern Iraq and Shiite Muslim unrest in the south, Dr. Hammadi said "then came the agents of foreigners to commit national high treason by stabbing their country in the back."

"The sectarian sedition is breaching its last after the perpetrators and those standing behind them across the borders were crowned with shame," Dr. Hammadi added.

"The door is now open for a phase of reconstruction and reform," he said. "Iraq's economy will progress and grow, and democratic life and law shall return."

Dr. Hammadi was appointed a week ago in a decree by President Saddam, who had kept the title prime minister himself since he came to power in 1979. The new government was sworn in Tuesday.

President Saddam pledged in a

(Continued on page 5)

Another rose-red city near Petra?

By Elia Nasrallah
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — At least one good thing has come out of last week's rain storm which wreaked havoc and caused widespread devastation in the southern governorates of Karak, Maan and Tafieh. Apart from the rain, which is considered as a great blessing for Jordan, new artefacts close to the Nabatean city of Petra have come to light in the wake of the storm.

An official at the Department of Antiquities who preferred anonymity told the Jordan Times that the remains of a large section of an ancient city that had been concealed for ages were suddenly revealed after vast quantities of earth and rock were washed away and hurled down the canyon within the boundaries of the rose red city.

According to the official, the concerned authorities have temporarily sealed off the area, pending the outcome of examinations conducted by three noted archaeologists — hurriedly invited to Jordan to shed more light on the new finds. The scholars, now busy at the site, adjacent to Petra, revealed some of the facts about the finds, but promised a comprehensive report about the discoveries as soon as the preliminary examination has been completed.

The archaeologists believe that sections of the ancient site in question are indeed part of an ancient city built much earlier

than Petra, which is believed to have been carved in the rock by the Nabateans nearly 2000 years ago.

"We have engaged a small team of excavators to help us carry out the work at the site, but we cannot at the moment reveal much about our work," according to Peter Simons, head of the three-member team.

"So far we have uncovered the remains of tombs, homes carved in the rock, water channels, baths, paved streets, market places used by the Nabateans and a vast building resembling the treasury of Petra," said Dr. Simons.

Archaeologists have acknowledged the existence of visible signs in the hilly regions north of Wadi Mousa like pottery shards, fallen stones, wall lines and other elements, which indicated so long that many of Petra's monuments were still buried beneath the earth," Dr. Simons noted.

The new site, he said, could be part of the still concealed large site of a "more ancient Petra which could have been built 3000 years ago."

One of the most striking monuments of which only a part has been unearthed, he added, is a temple and a nearby terrace which could be part of an amphitheatre.

The Ministry of Tourism has so far kept tight-lipped about the new discovery but officials who declined to be named said that more information could be released on Tuesday.

Soviet foreign minister in China

BEIJING (Agencies) — Soviet Foreign Minister Alexander Bessmertnykh arrived in China Sunday to prepare for the two countries' upcoming Communist Party summit and discuss the post-war situation in the Gulf.

"I understand (my) visit is going to be very good," Mr. Bessmertnykh told reporters at Beijing's airport before being whisked away in a motorcade. "We have a very important programme to discuss."

Mr. Bessmertnykh arrived from Japan, where he also was making preparations for a summit. Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev is to visit Tokyo on April 16.

Mr. Bessmertnykh was met by Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Tian Zengpei, but was not scheduled to begin talks with Chinese officials until Monday morning. It is Mr. Bessmertnykh's first visit to China since he succeeded Eduard Shevardnadze as foreign minister on Jan. 15.

In Beijing, Mr. Bessmertnykh will make arrangements for Chinese Communist Party General Secretary Jiang Zemin's trip to Moscow in mid-May. He also is expected to discuss the post-war situation in the Gulf, the Korean peninsula and Cambodia, the official Soviet news agency TASS said.

Beijing and Moscow, bitter foes for three decades, are working towards better relations in the diplomatic, economic and military trade fields, diplomats said.

Mr. Jiang said in an interview published on Sunday: "In the past four decades and more, Sino-Soviet relations, described in one sentence, have gone through a tortuous path. What happened then are bygone."

Mr. Bessmertnykh will meet his Chinese counterpart Qian Qichen and Premier Li Peng Monday. He leaves on Tuesday.

China said earlier this month it would give a one billion Swiss franc (\$730 million) commodity loan to the Soviet Union to let it buy Chinese goods and ease economic hardship.

China in turn is extremely interested in buying Soviet arms, particularly the SU-27 fighter, diplomats said.

China has been shut off from Western military technology in retaliation for using the army to crush pro-democracy unrest in Beijing in June, 1989.

There has been speculation that China would buy about 20 of the fighters, estimated to cost about \$30 million each, paying in cash and goods.

Assad, Mubarak discuss post-war situation

CAIRO (AP) — Syrian President Hafez Al Assad Sunday held talks with President Hosni Mubarak on the post-Gulf war situation in the Middle East and other issues.

Mr. Mubarak greeted Mr. Assad at Cairo international airport and then gave him an official welcome ceremony at the presidential Kubbah palace.

The Egyptian president hosted a working iftar for his Syrian guest.

Security arrangements in the region after the end of the Gulf war were likely to be the main issue the two presidents will discuss.

Egypt sent 38,500 troops and the Syrians 19,000 soldiers to Saudi Arabia to join the U.S.-led allied offensive which forced Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait. Egypt, Syria and Saudi Arabia were at the forefront of Arab states which opposed the Aug. 2 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

Earlier this month, the two countries, as well as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates and Oman agreed to create a joint peacekeeping force. Egypt and Syria are expected to field as many as 100,000 soldiers in the new force, two-thirds from Egypt.

In exchange for security, the oil-rich countries will offer financial aid to the two states.

The duration of Mr. Assad's visit to Cairo was not immediately known.

Syrian sources said Mr. Assad and Mr. Mubarak were likely to discuss the efforts of Iraqi rebels to oust the government of President Saddam Hussein as well as prospects for an Arab-Israeli settlement.

Syria restored ties with Egypt in December 1989 after a 10-year break resulting from Cairo's decision to make peace with Israel.

Kuwaiti opposition hardens demands

KUWAIT (R) — Kuwaiti opposition leaders hardened their demands in negotiations on a post-Gulf war cabinet this weekend, calling for a review of multi-million dollar reconstruction contracts signed during the crisis.

Opposition activists and diplomats said opposition leaders demanded the review Saturday during talks with Crown Prince Sheikh Saad Al Abdullah Al Sabah, who had been expected to announce a new cabinet last week.

The 15 opposition leaders once again made clear to the crown prince, who is also prime minister, that they would not join his cabinet unless a clear date for parliamentary elections were set. "Our leaders demanded the formation of a representative committee of Kuwaitis known for their integrity and honesty to reconsider all contracts signed during the occupation," opposition lawyer Salah Al Hashem told

Reuters.

The emirate's oil-rich government-in-exile signed reconstruction deals with several Western firms during the seven-month Iraqi occupation. Preliminary estimates put the cost of rebuilding the emirate and repairing the damage inflicted on its oil industry by fleeing Iraqi troops at more than \$50 billion.

Mr. Hashem said opposition groups, united by their common demand for democratic reforms, feared a select few from the ruling Al Sabah family, mainly ministers, could have been made local partners in projects awarded so far.

According to the emirate's law, foreign companies must have Kuwaiti partners holding at least a 51 per cent share.

"Consistent with what they see as government corruption, they made the demand at the Saturday meeting," one Western diplomat said.

Gaza leaders in Cairo for talks on council

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (Agencies) — Three leading Palestinians from the occupied Gaza Strip have gone to Cairo to seek economic aid and Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) approval to set up a local council in Gaza City. Israeli sources and Palestinians said Sunday.

The three left Thursday. Israeli military authorities said the trip was aimed at raising Arab money for new housing and economic development in the crowded, impoverished strip.

But Palestinians said the delegation would also seek PLO approval for one of the three, Faez Abu Rahme, former head of the Gaza Bar Association, to become mayor of Gaza City at the head of a local council.

The other two Palestinians are brothers Akil Mattar, head of the engineers association, and Akram Mattar, director of an Israeli-run eye hospital in Gaza City.

An Israeli official told Reuters

last week the government was considering making life easier for Palestinians in the occupied territories. He did not give details but Israeli newspapers reported a Gaza City council was one possibility.

Easing restrictions on the Palestinians in the occupied territories could be part of symbolic confidence-building gestures the United States wants Israel and Arab states to make as a step towards peace talks.

The last Gaza City mayor resigned at the start of the Palestinian uprising in December 1987. Since then the city has been run by an Arab city manager and Israeli military authorities.

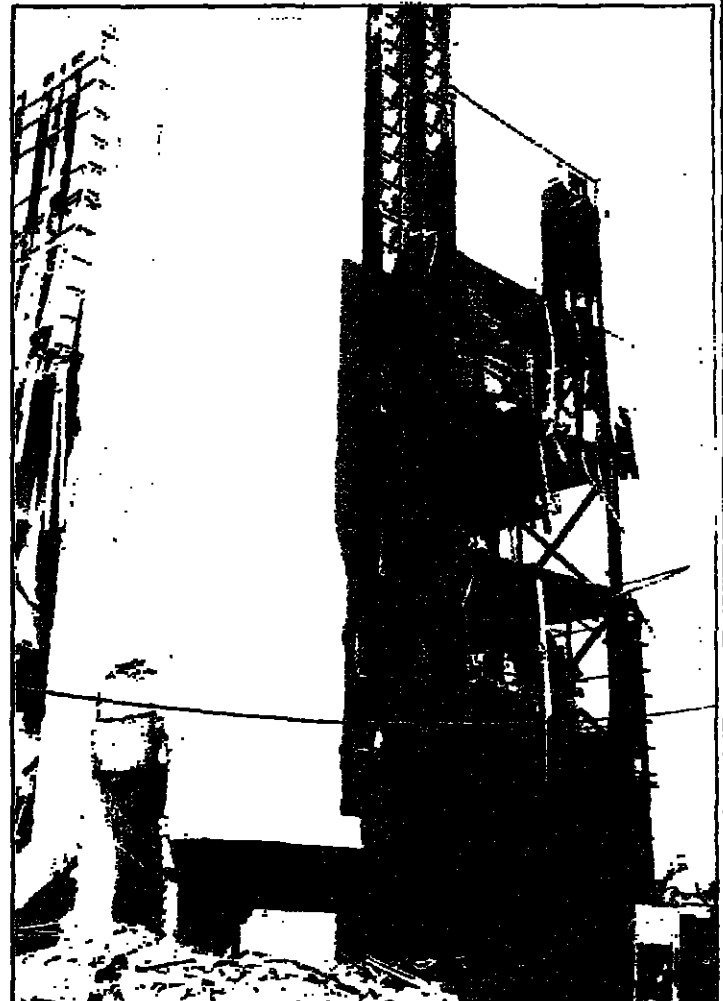
Israeli officials have recently held talks with Palestinians on improving services and establishing a local government in Gaza City which is acceptable to the residents.

The Islamic fundamentalist

(Continued on page 3)



The allied bombing targeted not only sophisticated telecommunication centres in Baghdad (right) but also basic facilities such as water distribution networks (photos by Mariam M. Shahin)



Iraqi group set up to coordinate relief supplies faces awesome task

'What happened here is unimaginable,' director says

By Mariam M. Shahin
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

The writer has just returned from a week-long working visit to Iraq.

BAGHDAD — Physical evidence of the American-led bombing of this city which lies between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers is abundant. In every district of this city of four million people almost all buildings which took care of public services lie in ruins. In most neighbourhoods there is at least one bloc of civilian homes which was hit, proving that this war was not as precise bombing as claimed by the allied forces.

But the rebuilding of the city's and country's infrastructure to ensure that its citizens

have the basic necessities as defined in the U.N. Human Rights Charter is an awesome task. To know the extent of the damage and what exactly is needed for rebuilding is a question which as of yet cannot be answered by Iraqi officials.

"Since there are no communications, it is rather difficult to know what is working and what is not," says Dr. Riad Al Qaysi, under-secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs who has been assigned the task of heading a fact-finding committee for coordination of relief supplies.

Trying to dampen the frustration of relief organisations which feel that duplication of certain relief supplies is stunting their efforts, Dr. Qaysi admits that duplication may very well take place because "no one knows what is needed and where."

The task of the Relief Supply Committee will be to come up with estimates of what has been broken apart, where and to determine the needs of the population according to their location and resources available in these areas. The number of children in a given area would indicate how much "baby-milk formula" is needed in a certain district, to name just one example.

Shifting populations — a result of the war and internal unrest for which the war opened the door — will also have to be considered. The population of many Baghdad suburbs is reported to have risen since the unrest in the south began March 6. The number of Iraqis displaced by the occupation by American forces of 15 per cent of Iraq's total land area has also not been determined yet.

The government, which is readjusting to an opening up of the internal political system, cannot give the countless non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that are in Iraq any

(Continued on page 3)

هذا من الأصل

Catholics mark Easter with plea for Mideast peace

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM

(Agencies) — The Church of the Holy Sepulcher was lit with hundreds of candles and filled with the perfume of incense as Christians prayed on Easter Sunday to mark the resurrection of Christ. The Roman Catholic patriarch of Jerusalem, Michel Sabbah, said mass in the venerated Crusader basilica for several hundred Arab Christians and small groups of Western pilgrims.

He later told reporters that the message of Easter was one of peace for the Middle East, so recently torn by the Gulf war. "We need no more bloodshed," Patriarch Sabbah said. "We need to realise all peaceful and just ways."

Patriarch Sabbah, the first Arab to lead the Latin church in the Holy Land, also urged Israeli leaders to come to terms with the Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip.

He noted that the Jewish celebration of Pesach, or Passover, which began last Friday, marks the deliverance of the ancient Hebrews from slavery in Egypt.

"The message of Pesach is a message of liberation for all people, for the Israeli people and the Palestinian people as well," he said. "This means courage and means not to be afraid of peace."

A similar Easter appeal came from the Greek Catholic Patriarch of Jerusalem, Lutfi Laham. "The message of the feast of Easter is of redemption, freedom, joy and happiness, peace and stability," Patriarch Laham said. "Our people are looking for a genuine Easter so that our country can rejoice in peace and happiness."

On Sunday, the army lifted the blanket curfew it had imposed Friday on the Gaza Strip. Curfews also lifted in most of the West Bank, although residents of about a dozen towns and refugee camps remained confined to their homes, the army said.

Palestinians again were allowed to resume their jobs inside Israel, but only if they had special army travel permits. The Church of the Holy Sepulcher, built over the sites where tradition holds Christ was crucified and buried, is the focus of Easter week celebrations.

It was especially busy holiday because while the Latin churches were celebrating Easter Sunday, the Orthodox rites marked their Palm Sunday. The Orthodox, observing the Julian calendar, will observe Easter next Sunday.

Patriarch Sabbah led worshippers, each carrying a single beeswax candle, in a celebratory procession around the brass and marble sepulcher in the centre of the church.

At one point, Patriarch Sabbah's procession had to pause while Armenian Orthodox paraded into the church for their Palm Sunday rites.

The visiting Russian Orthodox patriarch of Moscow, Alexi II, joined Greek Patriarch Diodoros II in Palm Sunday prayers at the church.

Patriarch Sabbah, in a long pink robe, marched with clergy through the wind-swept cobblestone alleys of the walled old city sacred to Christians, Jews and Muslims.

The church's Muslim doorkeeper, Wajeh Nusseibeh, said less than a thousand worshippers were there, compared with 4,000 in the years before the Palestinian uprising erupted in the occupied territories. The uprising is now in its fourth year.

Christian pilgrims said they were celebrating a time of togetherness. "I'll treasure this forever. I think people should come regardless," said Stephen Harrison, 21, a U.S. soldier from Washington, serving with peacekeeping forces in Sinai.

He and his comrades stared in awe at the traditional tomb in the centre of the majestic church and some kissed the stone of anointment where Jesus' body was prepared for burial.

Some pilgrims were confused by the hodge-podge of priests in multi-coloured robes marching in procession to commemorate the resurrection while hymns echoed in the domed church.

The Greek Orthodox and the Armenians carried plants. Easter Sunday for them and most resident Palestinians comes next Sunday.

Israeli soldiers and children milled outside the fourth century church on the sunny, warm day. "I didn't feel uncomfortable. Actually I feel better seeing soldiers around. At the Mount of Olives we got stones thrown at our car," said George McEachern, 40, of Toronto, Canada.

"This is the holiest city in the world, but there is such strife here. I do have hope. I pray for peace," he said.

Papal appeal
In the Vatican, Pope John Paul II in his Easter Sunday message hit out at the death and destruction of the Gulf war, condemned oppression of peoples in the Middle East and appealed for a just international order.

Addressing about 150,000 people in St Peter's Square and millions more in over 50 nations watching on television, the Pope asked them to "rejoice in this day of light, strength and hope, which makes the darkness menacing the earth recede."

"Darkness which also recently has cast a shadow over the whole human community — when a choice was made of aggression and the violation of international law."

"When it was presumed to solve the tensions between the peoples by war, the power of death," the pontiff said, speaking from the red-draped central balcony of St Peter's Basilica.

"I address myself to you, the leaders of nations. Only upon an international order in which law and freedom are indivisible for all can the society we all hope for be founded," he said.

"Lend an ear, humanity of our time, to the long-ignored aspiration of oppressed peoples, such as the Palestinians, the Lebanese, the Kurds," he said.

The Polish-born pontiff delivered his twice-yearly "urbi et orbi" (to the city and the world) message after celebrating an open-air Easter mass in the square under a cold grey sky.

He then wished the world a happy Easter in 54 languages including Arabic, Urdu, Tamil, Swahili, Ukrainian and Albanian.

Albania on Sunday held its first multi-party elections after more than four decades of hardline Stalinist rule and its Christian community, persecuted by the communists, celebrated Easter for the first time in 24 years.

"I am thinking also of you, dear Catholic community of Albania," the Pope said.

The Pope said the nations of Africa, Asia and Latin America needed more support in their struggle for greater freedom and democracy.

He said that "from the Baltic to the Mediterranean, and in other areas of the world," the demands of people for respect of their identity and rights had not always been answered.

The Pope has repeatedly voiced his support for Lithuania's efforts to gain independence from the Soviet Union, which President Mikhail Gorbachev has denied them.

But the exiled head of the Ukrainian Catholics, Cardinal Myroslav Lubachivsky, returned home Saturday after more than half a century to rebuild a church

Palestinian doctor reports Israeli abuse in occupied territories

A NOTED PALESTINIAN urologist, arrested at the end of the Gulf war on suspicion of preparing leaflets endangering state security, said he was physically abused during interrogation.

Dr. Mamdouh Acker, 47, who practises at Makassed Hospital in East Jerusalem, was arrested Feb. 27 and kept in the Ramallah military government complex until March 25.

In a public statement from prison, through his attorney, Jonathan Kuttab, Acker said he had suffered "isolation, sleep deprivation and threats."

Kuttab said Acker told him he had been deprived of sleep for 60 consecutive hours, periods, and had been handcuffed behind his back, with a sack over his head in a tiny cell.

Last week, B'tselem, the human rights organisation, said that abuse of this kind was against the law but "routine" during General Security Services interrogations, and demanded an independent commission of inquiry.

Acker, who is close to leading Palestinian activist Faisal Hussein, has frequently addressed Israeli groups and

spoken out on behalf of coexistence. During the war, he was one of seven Palestinians who signed a stinging attack on European Community for supporting the U.S. in the Gulf war and for offering more aid to Israel, for damage suffered in missile attacks, than it was offering Palestinians. — The Jerusalem Post.

Amnesty report

Israeli media had quoted official Israeli sources as saying he was being interrogated in relation to disturbances, the issuing of leaflets hostile to the authorities and contacts with illegal organisations.

Dr. Acker is known for having publicly promoted dialogue between Palestinians and Israelis aiming at a peaceful solution to their conflict. He has contributed such views in newspaper articles and meetings. He has also been active with the Association of Israeli-Palestinian Physicians for Human Rights, set up in March 1988 to focus on the medical aspects of human rights violations in the occupied territories, and with the Palestinian Centre for the Study on Non-Violence, founded in January 1985 to promote non-violent

ways to conflict resolution. Amnesty International teleaxed the Israeli authorities on March 5, requesting information on the exact reasons for Dr. Acker's detention and his current legal status. The organisation feared he might have been detained solely for his non-violent political opinions and activities, as well as for his human rights activities.

"He should be released immediately and unconditionally if that is the case," Amnesty International said.

The organisation said if there was evidence suggesting Dr. Acker had been involved in violence, this should be produced and he should be given an adequate opportunity to challenge his detention, including by having prompt access to lawyers.

In recent months several Palestinian figures known for their public promotion of a peaceful solution to the Palestinian/Israeli conflict have been arrested. They include Dr. Ahmad Al Yazji, another physician active with the Association of Israeli-Palestinian Physicians for Human Rights, who was given a one-year "administrative detention" order in November 1990.

Explosion rocks Kuwait City on Easter

KUWAIT (R) — Kuwait's tiny Christian community celebrated Easter Sunday but a nearby mine blast was a noisy reminder of the Gulf war and the seven-month Iraqi occupation.

The Easter service had just ended when allied soldiers, sweeping the mine-littered Kuwait shoreline, detonated an Iraqi mine in a controlled explosion, rocking the church.

Several hundred people, mainly Filipinos and Indians with a scattering of Westerners and allied servicemen and women, had filled Kuwait City's only Roman Catholic church for the service.

On worshipper, a woman soldier wearing combat fatigues, rested her M-16 rifle against the pew as she knelt down and prayed in the large, sparsely-decorated church.

"We should thank the Lord for granting to this region the gift of peace," the priest said in his sermon. "Praise the Lord for helping us during the past months of captivity."

Kuwait's pre-war foreign population of more than a million included many Christians from the Philippines, Sri Lanka, India, Lebanon, Egypt and Western countries.

Most fled after last August's Iraqi invasion and the Christian community dropped to a few thousand.

Against the Palestinians. The general said he learned a lot from Vietnam about what happens when an army loses support at home.

"I did the best I could to keep our ethics intact," he said.

In the Gulf war, Israel suppressed its eye-for-an-eye instincts and absorbed 18 missile attacks without retaliating.

The policy won international praise, but left Israelis feeling vulnerable and dispirited by the experience of sitting at home in gas masks, powerless to do more than pray.

Gen. Shomron has said "our fingers were itching," but also argues it was wise to stay out of the war and that Israel "gained" because Iraq, Jordan and the Palestine Liberation Organisation — were "weakened."

Now the public is upset again, this time by allegations that many of the gas masks distributed on Gen. Shomron's orders were substandard.

He denies the charges but also insists that, with its limited budget, the army must give priority to developing new tanks rather than better gas masks.

"The real threat we face is an invasion by ground forces backed by airplanes," he said. "If that ever happened, everyone would forget about even discussing threats from Scuds."

Summing up, military analyst Avi Benayahu wrote in the daily Al Hamishmar: "Our outgoing chief of staff has faced some dark times, a particularly difficult period for Israel."

He takes credit for resisting pressure from political hardliners to apply even greater force

arms suppliers. The offender, Rami Dotan, is serving a 13-year prison term.

Hirsch Goodman, a military analyst and editor of the English-language Jerusalem weekly, said the case "cost the army a public sense of its sanctity."

Some commanders say the army is subject to closer scrutiny than in the days when Israel fought for its "existence."

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There were agonising trials of soldiers who beat protesters to death. The soldiers claimed to be acting on orders, but their commanders denied it.

To the public, the trials suggested lack of leadership and unwillingness to take responsibility for actions.

"Fighting against women, children; when an army gets into a situation like that, it is a real problem," Gen. Shomron conceded this month on Israel Radio.

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JPA board elects treasurer, secretary-general

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Jordan Press Association (JPA) board, which was elected on March 22, held its first meeting Sunday, under the chairmanship of its president, Hashem Khreisat, and elected a treasurer and a secretary-general as well as a deputy president.

A statement at the end of the meeting said that the deputy president is Abdul Hafiz Mohammad while the secretary-general is Omar Abanda. Fakhri Abu Hamdeh retains his post as treasurer. Ali Abu Tabaneh and Suleiman Barzawi were elected deputies to the treasurer and secretary-general.

The statement said that a disciplinary council of three members had been set up, and a committee to take decisions on new association members had been formed. Another committee, set up Sunday, is the Health Insurance Committee, according to the statement which said that the association board had decided to hold weekly meetings on Mondays.

Khreisat was elected JPA president unopposed for the second consecutive term. He can no more nominate himself for another term according to the JPA constitution. Of the nine member group, three who represent owners of local press magazines and newspapers were elected unopposed while the remaining six members were elected by vote at the March 22 meeting.

Huge, glassy crater outside Amman baffles scientists

By Ica Wahbeh
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — A new discovery in Jordan, near Qasr Al Jilat, some 100 kilometres south east of Amman, in the middle of the desert, is bewildering the scientific community here and giving way to speculation of the most spectacular kind. The "discovery," over which a shepherd grazing his sheep actually stumbled, is a huge crater, of about 600 metres diameter, with a perfectly rounded rim and completely devoid of vegetation.

The most interesting thing about it, though, is the glassy aspect of the "crater." The sand was totally vitrified, making scientists believe that it must have happened under great pressure and very high temperatures, something similar to the holes left by falling meteorites, but "under more intense heat and pressure," said Olaf Trifkenson, professor of volcanology and meteorological studies at the University of Reykjavik in Iceland, who is currently visiting the country.

"It is nothing like a volcano, and very little like a meteorite crater," he said. "I could say it is a UFO's landing pad if I didn't know there had been no sightings of unidentified flying objects in Jordan," he added.

According to other scientists who have been to the site, there is "no life, nor vegetation" on the odd patch. Their opinions are varied, ranging from "ancient settlement that has disappeared because of radiation" (no track of any sort of rays have been found so far), hence the melting of sand and its glassy touch, to UFOs and to more down to earth volcano residue of a most interesting and unprecedented sort.

Dr. Trifkenson said that he has already contacted his department at the university asking for a larger team to study this phenomenon and propose explanations for its origin. Jordanian officials meanwhile are sending their own group to investigate, and the team is likely to report back on their findings to Amman today.

Art exhibition to be opened

AMMAN (J.T.) — Under the patronage of Her Royal Highness Princess Wijdan Ali an embroidery and handicrafts exhibition will be opened Thursday, April 4, at Alia Art Gallery.

Ten per cent of the proceeds of the exhibition, which will last till April 12, will be donated to supporting the Palestinian intifada.



His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, Saturday tours the southern regions affected by the rainstorm (Petra photo)

Electricity network completely restored in Karak Governorate

KARAK (J.T.) — The Karak district Electricity Authority announced Sunday the restoration of power supply to all areas within the governorate of Karak and said all networks had been repaired and lines reconnected.

A spokesman for the authority here said that high voltage supply had been resumed to Ajl, Ghor Safi, Sall Karak and Muta, all areas affected by the rainstorm and the floods in the past week.

Authority sources said that even the remote areas of these regions had their power supply back.

Electricity along with telephones, road communication, and other services were disrupted by the storm and teams from various ministries had been at work over the past week to restore life to normal and resume services to the public.

Minister of Public Works and Housing Abdul Raouf Al Rawabdeh was quoted as saying that it would take three weeks to restore road communications, but up to three months to rebuild the damaged bridges.

Karak was the governorate

worst hit, in the south, and the minister is preparing a full report about the extent of the damages and the help for the farmers, to be submitted to the Cabinet.

His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, Saturday toured Karak, Maan and Tafleeh, the three worst affected regions, and inspected the stricken areas.

At the same time, teams from the ministries of public works, the municipal and rural affairs and the environment, agriculture and water and irrigation are going ahead with plans to restore life to these areas.

A spokesman for the Agricultural Credit Corporation (ACC) in the Karak region said that a corporation committee had embarked on a wide study of agricultural projects that have been financed by the ACC.

The spokesman said that the study was needed before the ACC would decide on assistance to the farmers who incurred losses and on the question of rescheduling the farmers' loans.

The spokesman said that the ACC would also look into the

prospect of helping farmers carry out maintenance and restoration work to their projects.

Secretary General of the Jordan Valley Authority (JVA), Dr. Abdul Aziz Wishah, said in a statement to the Jordan News Agency, Petra, that the rainstorm had caused severe damages to irrigation canals in the southern Jordan Valley region as well as to dams and canals.

He said that the JVA had prepared an emergency plan to carry out repair work, and its programmes would be completed by Wednesday. Officials from the Ministry of Education visited Karak schools in order to estimate the extent of damages afflicted on them. At the moment, students and scouts from Karak Governorate are involved in an effort to remove mud and rocks from schools and conduct other voluntary work.

Teams and officials involved in the repair and restoration work within the three governorates were urged by Prince Hassan to coordinate their efforts and speed up work.

Port authorities report revived activity

AQABA (J.T.) — Despite harassment imposed by U.S. and allied naval forces on cargo vessels heading for Aqaba, the port authorities Sunday reported an upsurge in the number of ships docking in the port.

For the first time since the start of the Gulf crisis, the port authorities reported the arrival there of a total 18 vessels carrying food supplies and other merchandise ordered by Jordanian merchants.

Ports Corporation Director General Awad Tal said in a statement that 18 vessels carrying sugar, frozen meat, barley flour,

tea as well as containers laden with various goods arrived in the port over the past two days alone.

It was only last week that the U.S.-led naval forces turned back a cargo vessel laden with goods imported from northern Europe. The ship was intercepted and directed towards an Egyptian port.

A statement by the Jordan National Shipping Lines (JNSL) said that the vessel was ordered to stop for search and inspection and later ordered to head for Suez, in Egypt, for proper inspection of the containers.

The Ports Corporation director said that as long as the blockade continues, there will be a surcharge insurance on freight and the goods will have a higher price when sold in the Jordanian markets.

The Shipping Agents Association (SAA) said that the interception is being conducted in the Red Sea and the entrance to the Tiran Straits by vessels from the United States, France, Spain and Greece.

Aqaba once served as the main port for Iraqi imports, specially during the Iraq-Iran war.

Gazans

(Continued from page 1)
group Hamas, supports efforts to set up a municipal council, the Israeli newspaper Haaretz said. Palestinians said Mr. Abu Rahme, who often meets visiting foreign government officials for talks on Israeli-Arab peace efforts, was acceptable to both Israelis and Gaza Palestinians but needed the backing of the PLO.

Retaken

(Continued from page 1)

the Turkish border. Rebel spokesmen in London and Damascus denied the reported fall of Dohuk and Erbil, 120 kilometres southeast.

A spokesman for the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan said fighting continued in the two cities and near the key northern oil centre of Kirkuk.

Meanwhile, Iraq, in a message to U.N. Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar, denounced what it called provocative violations of its airspace by American and Saudi warplanes, JNA said.

Iraq also complained in the message that American troops occupying southern Iraq were plundering the archaeological site of Ur.

Iraqi forces started a major offensive last week against Kurdish rebels in northeastern Iraq.

Government troops moved against the Kurds in strength after they appeared to have largely quelled the rebellion by Shiite Muslims in southern Iraq.

A week ago Kurdish rebels talked of setting up a provisional government in "liberated" Kurdistan. Now they paint a picture of bombardment by Iraqi forces, deteriorating living conditions and mass flight by civilians.

Izzat Ibrahim, the deputy commander in chief of the Iraqi armed forces, told President Saddam Sunday that Erbil was fully

Jordan silent on GCC decision; PLO official blasts suspension of aid

By Ghadeer Taber
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Jordan officially remained silent Sunday on the decision by the Gulf states to suspend financial assistance to the Kingdom while the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) harshly criticised the move.

Jordanian officials refused to comment on the statements by Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Secretary-General Abdullah Bishara but privately they say the move was not a surprise and would not affect the country greatly.

Officials conceded that relations with the Gulf states were tainted with mistrust but do not expect the Gulf states to maintain such a posture for a very long time and feel confident that at least for this year the country has received enough emergency assistance to cope with the cut in Gulf aid.

Parliamentarian and former minister Abdul Karim Kabariti said the GCC statement was "nothing new" and that the Gulf states had already begun "decreasing their financial aid to Jordan when the Kingdom initiated its democratic process... It is a penalty for democratisation in the country."

The GCC — Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates — said it was suspending aid to Jordan and the PLO because they did not support the U.S.-led war against Iraq.

"No forgiveness, no forgetting," Mr. Bishara, a Kuwaiti, said in announcing the halt in aid. The announcement was only a reaffirmation of an earlier unannounced decision to suspend

aid. Jordan and the PLO have not received any assistance from the Gulf states since the August 2 invasion of Kuwait for their sympathetic position towards Iraq in the crisis.

PLO official Mohammad Milhem said Sunday the "Palestinian struggle is not for sale" and that the "timing of Mr. Bishara's statement was counter-productive at a time when Arab League representatives are meeting in Cairo to try to heal rifts and repair strained relations caused by the crisis."

The crisis caused a deep schism in the Arab World between the anti-Iraq camp, led by the Gulf states, Egypt and Syria, and those opposed to the allied war — Jordan, PLO, Sudan and Yemen.

"It is a time for reconciliation and reconsideration of all our positions and not a time for such statements... we have to think differently and stop talking about money and funds and concentrate on the real dangers," Mr. Milhem said.

Mr. Bishara, referring to the position of PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat during the crisis, said: "Mr. Arafat took a very reckless course of action and will have to bear the consequences."

Mr. Arafat, analysts argue, could not take an anti-Iraq or a clear-cut pro-Kuwait stand because he would have risked his political career in light of Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein's popularity among the Palestinians.

"The PLO position was correct politically — against occupation of territory by force and against denying the Kuwaiti people their right to self-determination — but we could not highlight the official position for political reasons," said Palestine National Council

(PNC) member Assad Abdul Rahman.

"Palestinians sided with Iraq because it was against the U.S. Arafat and the leadership would have lost a great deal if they had taken a position contrary to the mood of the masses. This is politics," he added.

The GCC secretary-general refused to disclose the amount of aid suspended but the GCC states have long been the PLO's main financial backers and have also provided millions of dollars to Jordan as a frontline state with Israel.

Jordan, officially neutral, but publicly sympathetic towards Iraq, and against the allied war, will lose an estimated \$400 to \$500 million annually, Jordanian sources said.

According to PLO officials, of the \$1.5 billion in Arab contributions the PLO has received since 1979, \$1 billion came from the Gulf states, but Mr. Milhem described the amount as "peanuts" compared to what the Gulf states paid for the war.

"Since the start of the revolution, the Gulf states have given the PLO peanuts compared to the money they poured into the war treasury to destroy both Iraq and Kuwait..." Mr. Milhem said. He said the PLO was in a "very difficult" financial position, but "thanks to increased contributions to UNRWA (U.N. Relief and Works Agency) by the European Community and Japan, obligations to Palestinian refugee camps continue to be met."

Jordanian economist Fuhed Faneh, echoing the view of officials and average Jordanians, said the Gulf states would not punish Jordan indefinitely.

"When emotions calm down,

the Gulf states will realise that it is in their best interest and security to have a strong and stable Jordan.... It will take time," Mr. Faneh told the Jordan Times.

Jordan, which has a staggering \$8 billion foreign debt, has lost, according to U.N. estimates, 30 per cent of its gross national product in 1990 and will lose 50 per cent in 1991 in the form of exports, higher oil prices, expatriate remittances, transit charges.

But economists say emergency soft loans and grants from the European Community and Japan, totalling about \$900 million, will cushion the economic blow this year, but warn that the country will have to take harsh solutions to cope with the next few years.

A front page commentary in Al Ra'i Arabic daily, accusing the Gulf leaders of having a "loan shark mentality," said the Gulf states "are wrong; they are mistaken because they are condemning... blind to the facts, ignorant of people's qualities and with nothing on their minds except money, money, money..."

"Jordan, which knows where it stood yesterday, where it stands today and where it will stand tomorrow, does not need the aid of brothers. Not because Jordan is a rich and strong country... but because its stands emanate from the depth of its national commitment which it will not change or abandon," the commentary, signed by the editor, said.

Sarcastically thanking the Gulf states for their assistance, Al Ra'i said: "Take your money Gulf brethren and may God keep you happy with your money... so you will be able to fund your patrons in Washington and London with your billions of dollars."

ACC to grant loans to boost agriculture

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Agricultural Credit Corporation (ACC) is willing to offer long term loans to citizens wishing to finance agricultural industries or to cultivate land and produce crops to help the country ensure food security, according to Mansour Ben Tarif, ACC director general.

Ben Tarif said in a statement that such loans would carry an interest of seven per cent, but could be repaid over 12 to 15 years, with a very reasonable grace period, depending on the production.

"Settlement of loans in this case could start after the project has begun production and the beneficiary started selling products," Ben Tarif explained in his statement to Al Ra'i Arabic daily.

The ACC director said that the plan aimed at encouraging citizens to initiate agricultural industries so that the surplus vegetables and fruits could be processed and sold around the year to the local markets and other countries.

Since the beginning of 1991, Ben Tarif said, the ACC has granted loans to farmers, totalling JD 1.25 million, but the ACC has much more allocations, amounting to nearly JD 8 million, earmarked for loans during 1991; therefore the door is open for any

investor or farmer to benefit from these facilities.

Ben Tarif referred to the situation in the southern regions of Jordan, affected by the recent rainstorm, and said that farmers in those regions could apply for loans because they need the money for repair and for resuming farming work.

According to Ben Tarif, the ACC plans complement those of the Ministry of Agriculture, which has been directing farmers' attention to the production of wheat in larger quantities due to the growing demand of this commodity.

Awad Hita, director of Al Mushaggar Agricultural Station, told the Jordan News Agency, Petra, that the government's nurseries and stations had been distributing improved types of seeds and fertiliser to the farmers in a bid to encourage them to grow wheat. He also said that the Ministry of Agriculture had been purchasing the locally produced wheat at prices higher than the international rate for the same reason.

Mr. Hita said that the improved seeds had been sown on 32,000 dunams in Madaba district alone. He said that other areas too were trying the improved seeds, specially in the Jordan Valley region.

Arab organisations condemn Israel on Land Day

AMMAN (J.T.) — Two Amman-based organisations Sunday issued statements in observance of "Land Day" in the occupied Palestinian land, commemorating the slaying, 15 years ago, of six Arabs in territory occupied since 1948.

The Arab Organisation for Human Rights (Jordan branch) said in its statement that the Israeli authorities "are pursuing their criminal acts against the Palestinians and have stepped up these acts in the past few days by deporting four Palestinians from the Gaza Strip and demolishing the homes of a number of Palestinian detainees."

"Despite the condemnation of Israel's actions in all countries and by all organisations, and despite calls for granting the Palestinians their human rights, the Israelis are pursuing their repressive measures," said the organisation's statement.

The Arab Organisation for Human Rights, it said, calls on the world organisations and the Human Rights Committee at the United Nations to expose Israel's atrocities and help the Palestinians regain their rights and homeland.

The other organisation was the Arab Youth Forum (AYF), which said in a statement here that the Palestinians had been deprived of the right to determine their fate on their own homeland, and that the Land Day was a reminder that the Palestinians are still denied the land they rightfully own.

The Arab Youth Forum urged the Arab youth to join efforts to help the Palestinians regain their usurped rights.

The 1.7 million Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip staged a strike Saturday marking Land Day anniversary; the Israeli forces were out in strength to prevent anti-Israeli demonstrations.

Iraqi official in Amman for talks on coordinating relief aid operations

AMMAN (J.T.) — An Iraqi official has arrived in Amman for talks on the channelling of relief supplies to the victims of the U.S.-led aggression on Iraq, and to coordinate work among humanitarian organisations taking charge of the process of sending the supplies to Iraq.

The official is Dr. Khaleel Abdul Hamid, from the Iraqi Red Crescent Society, who said he was spending several days in Jordan for talks with the concerned officials.

In a statement upon arrival Abdul Hamid said that consultations would be mainly with the Jordan National Red Crescent Society (JNRCS) which has been undertaking the main task of forwarding the relief supplies received from various countries.

Head of the Workers Union Ahmad Al Haddad who is just back from a tour of devastated Iraqi regions, said that the Iraqis are in great need of assistance.

Abdul Hamid said he would take part in a conference, to be held in Geneva, to coordinate the work of relief organisations sending help to Iraq.

At the same time efforts at the popular and official levels are contributing to continuing sending relief supplies to Iraqi victims of war.

A statement Sunday said that workers at the Jordan Petroleum Refinery Company (JPRC) had sent a convoy of trucks laden with medicine and food supplies to Iraq.

The Jordan Times Sunday erroneously quoted a statement by the U.S. embassy here about a new advisory to American citizens coming to Jordan, in part attributing it to an embassy official when it should have been attributed to the statement itself.

The Jordan Times regrets the mistake. Furthermore, the Jordan Times has just learnt that the embassy statement should have appeared under the title "Jordan — Caution" rather than "Jordan — Warning."

The statement, issued March 29, runs as follows:

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Weekly Political Pulse

By Waleed Sadi

Thank you, no charity

A RECENT U.N. study reveals that 30 per cent of Jordanians are living under the poverty line and about 250,000 children under the age of 12 suffer from malnutrition. These are obviously harsh indicators about the Jordanian economy that have been exacerbated by the Gulf crisis and by the halt to Arab support even prior to the eruption of the Kuwaiti conflict. As a matter of fact, Jordan began to experience economic and fiscal difficulties in the late eighties principally because the traditional inflow of aid from the Gulf region nearly dried up, causing unexpected disruptions in economic planning in the country. With the Gulf war now behind us and talk about removing the existing inequities between the rich and poor states in this part of the world gaining currency, is it not high time to translate these noble aspirations into actions? There is no way that stability and security in the Middle East and Gulf regions can be attained as long as large pockets of poverty and deprivation continue to afflict some of the Arab peoples. During a recent visit to Jordan, Canadian Foreign Minister Joe Clark made specific reference to the growing gap between the rich and the poor in the Middle East and called for its rectification as part and parcel of the much talked about new order. Yet Jordan continues to be penalised even after the end of the Gulf war and deprived of emergency and normal aid from its traditional sources

for no reason other than having expressed another peaceful and rational point of view on how to deal best with the crisis in the Gulf region. Saffooning Jordan and Jordanians economically and politically is no wise and effective way to promote the new international and regional order that have been heralded in recent times with much fanfare. If the pockets of poverty in Jordan continue to increase as now projected and malnutrition among the children of Jordan persist, then the stage is set not for stability and security but rather for instability and insecurity in the area. As the world turns a new page on the heels of the end of the East-West rivalry and is constructing a new international and regional order in the aftermath of the allied forces' war with Iraq, one wonders when will Jordan begin to receive the aid and support that it justly deserves? The talk of the international community is that Jordan played and continues to play a pivotal role in the quest for a permanent and just peace and security in the Middle East. The question that remains is how Jordan can conduct such an indispensable role with its children starving and its people falling deeper into poverty.

What exacerbate things for Jordan is the continued application of economic sanctions against Iraq, especially the ban on Iraq's export of oil. With most Jordanian trade and commerce still

oriented towards that country, there is no way that the wheels of industry will turn again at even modest speed without resuming full trade ties with Baghdad. And as long as Iraq is embargoed and deprived of opportunities to export its oil, it will naturally have no money to pay for Jordanian goods and services.

Lest it is forgotten, Jordan does not seek charity. What it calls for is temporary support till it is able to stand up on its feet again. There was a time just before the economic crisis when Jordan was well on complete economic recovery and economic self-sufficiency. Jordan and Jordanians never felt more proud in their lives than when they were on the threshold of economic independence. Yet unforeseen events both economic and political suddenly hit the country and with a vengeance. The construction of the blocs of peace and security in the region would naturally call for a full participation of Jordan in such a process. Investing in Jordan, therefore, is an investment in the new process that the countries of the world would want to usher into the Middle East and Gulf region. Those capitals of the world which express pious sentiments in favour of a new regional order for the Middle East, better rethink their perspective soon and begin the process of economic healing throughout the region especially Jordan and Iraq.

On Israel as on Iraq

Guest editorial
By Khalid Mahadin

IN YEARS gone by, we Arabs were right to demand the convening of an international conference through which to negotiate a political settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict. By the same token, we understood why the Israeli enemy always rejected one, and why the United States stood firmly against any attempt to translate the idea into practice.

For in those days, there was a parallel power capable of balancing the U.S., the USSR. There was China, whose abhorrence of Washington and distaste for Moscow prompted it to champion the causes of the Third World. France in those days did not go nearly as far as it has done since in drawing closer to the U.S. As for Britain, its policy was then — as it remains — a carbon copy of that of America.

That is why the Arabs used to call for an international conference and Israel used to refuse. The Arabs were pressing for a political settlement to the conflict that would be just. The Israelis feared precisely such a settlement, knowing that they stood to lose by obeying international law, or by acceding to the influence which the Soviet Union, China, and perhaps France, would have on steering the conference or formulating the settlement.

The picture now is entirely different. On one side stand the five permanent members of the Security Council, plus Israel and half the Arabs. On the other, at least from our region, stand only the Palestinians and Jordanians and the Arabs of the Maghreb. The Israelis and Americans have nothing more to fear from convening the conference. They can control its direction, decide what they like, and compel those who are demanding the implementation of international law and Resolutions 242 and 338 either to accept what is imposed on them, or reject the American-Israeli settlement. There will be no objections from Moscow or Beijing. France may suffice with signing on the dotted line in French ink rather than American ink, so as not to embarrass itself.

In the light of all this, the call for an international conference — given the existing balance of forces — is an invitation to an ambush. What we are hearing from the enemy camp these days about appropriate timing for a conference and the need for it to be prepared adequately may sound like violent rejection of the idea. But it is part of an American-Israeli game. The intention is that we be kept waiting a few weeks or months, and then we will be told that American pressure on Israel has succeeded, and it has been forced to accept the idea of a conference, even to attend it. We will hear loud applause from half the Arabs about this great transformation in U.S. policy, and we will be told how they have managed to undermine the American-Israeli strategic alliance with the new American-Arab strategic alliance which took shape in the Gulf crisis and the carnage inflicted on Iraq. Then an agreement will be imposed on us that is worse than Camp David.

The only way to confront this game is to demand that the international community, the U.S., Israel and all of those who claimed legal licence to slaughter the Iraqis, now demonstrate their respect for international law. Those who used U.N. resolutions against Iraq must impose Resolutions 242 and 338 on Israel with equal vigour. If they do so, we will drop our right to demand a mandatory economic embargo to starve the Israelis into submission, let alone to mobilise 30 armies to wage war on them! The aim is to get those resolutions implemented, and we do not mind by what method. Or must we bear witness for the one thousandth time to the way international law can be circumvented when it can serve the just cause of the Arabs?

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

The world community has a duty towards peace based on international legitimacy, and it should not be left under the mercy of the Israeli extremists who dream of the so-called greater Israel and refuse the idea of stability, security and peace in the Middle East, said Al Ra'i Arabic daily Sunday. In an interview with French television, King Hussein put forth, and advocated the principles which ought to be followed and implemented so that the aspired peace can be reached. The King warned against allowing the present chance to slip away and noted that Jordan is totally committed to reach peace and to help the Palestinians regain their rights in their own homeland, the paper noted. It said that the King has thus placed before the French and world public opinions Jordan's views, and he urged the Security Council to act immediately lest the peace opportunity be missed once again. The King specially urged the United States and its president to take steps towards ending the Arab-Israeli conflict and solving the Palestine problem. King Hussein said that it is time to make meaningful moves and to take practical steps towards peace through the implementation of Security Council resolutions, and warned against leaving matters to the will and whims of the Israeli aggressors, the paper pointed out. In his statement to the French television, the paper added the King stressed that peace is a right for all people of the world and that the Palestinians ought to be granted their rights and the peace to which they aspire.

A columnist in Al Dustour daily advocates the cause of the Jordanian expatriates who have now returned to settle permanently in the Kingdom after fleeing Kuwait. Mohammad Amin says that these expatriates have lost nearly \$8.4 billion in terms of assets, property, homes and cash saved in Kuwaiti banks as well as end of service compensation, etc. Most of these expatriates, the writer notes, are not returning to Kuwait where they spent most of their lives, but are now transformed into a needy group in dire need of government help. These expatriates whose money transfers to Jordan over the past two decades helped to stimulate the economy and boost the country's development and progress, are badly in need of government support not only to settle here but also to regain their lost property and compensation as well as savings in the Kuwaiti banks, which altogether can be a blessing for the Kingdom that would benefit from such vast wealth. It is unreasonable to see these expatriates lose everything following years of hard work, and it is unreasonable that Kuwait, which had paid the United States and the allied forces more than \$13 billion, and is paying much more to companies to rebuild Kuwait, ignore the rights of these expatriates whose efforts had built the Gulf emirate in the past four decades, the writer adds. The writer calls on the government to take speedy action and contact the Kuwaiti government to ensure the rights of its citizens before it is too late.

The road to spiritual reconciliation in Palestine

By David McDowall

Middle East International SINCE the Israeli-Palestine conflict owes so much to religious prejudice, the sceptic might be forgiven a wry smile on picking up *Beyond Occupation* (Beyond Occupation: American Jewish, Christian, and Palestinian voices for peace, edited by Roemery Radford Reuther and Marc H. Ellis, Beacon Press, Boston, Mass. 1990). But it deserves to be taken seriously. The editors have courageously attempted to set out a plurality of viewpoints on the road to reconciliation between Jew and Arab in Palestine. As a result, almost any reader, whatever their position on the conflict, is bound to take issue with much of what the fourteen different contributors have to say. If this were not so, there would probably have been little point in producing this book. However misplaced some arguments may seem, the sincerity of the authors cannot be doubted, and without question a vital part in the process of reconciliation is the willingness to consider what others have to say, and the readiness to change in the light of their arguments.

Core of the dilemma

From her feminist perspective, Judith Plascow puts her finger on the key stumbling block in this process. She calls it "otherness," meaning the inability or unwillingness to accord others, by gender, class, religion or ethnicity, the same value as ourselves. In her world women and Sephardi Jews lie outside the controlling, male Ashkenazi component of Israeli society, with its own divides between men and women, refugees and non-refugees, town-folk, peasants and bedouin. "The struggle to find new models for relating to difference," she argues, "is a struggle to bring the manifold riches of a complex human heritage to the careful nurturing of communal and individual life." She is right to feel this matter keenly, for it is the core of the moral dilemma and a profound challenge for all religions which, largely in male hands, assume a superior hold on divine truth and their own humanity. It is the litmus paper by which all the essays in this book may be judged.

Can the same moral worth be ascribed to both Arab and Israeli society in Palestine? The failure to empathise is a striking feature of one or two of the writers in this book. While anguished by the oppression committed against Palestinians today, it is clear that a major concern of two or three Jewish and Christian contributors is the corrupting effect this oppression has on Israel, which they see as unique among the countries of the world in its moral as well as political position.

This state of mind leads dangerously to the application of a different set of moral principles. For Rabbi Irving Greenberg and a Christian contributor, John Pawlikowski, the Holocaust experience justifies treating Israel as a special case. For Greenberg, "Israel has the right — and thus far it has the record — to act by a higher moral standard." It can lead to the assumption that Jews should be "more moral" than other people, while for Christians wracked with guilt over the Holocaust, there is a temptation to "make allowances for Israeli shortcomings that would not or should not be made for others."

Moral compromise

Greenberg accepts that all governments are involved in moral compromise, but in quoting the examples of Israel's shady dealing with South Africa and elsewhere he revealingly overlooks the most central issue that casts doubt on Israel's legitimacy, the way in which it was established through the dispossession of a large indigenous population. Greenberg gives his own chilling justification of genocide: "However, the United States of America was made possible in part by a systematic genocide of the Indians, over the course of centuries. This was shameful and it remains a permanent blot on America's record. But did anybody suggest that the cost was too high and it were better there had never been a United States?" Well, Rabbi Greenberg, I am sure that hundreds of thousands of native Americans thought so before they perished, but if not, I am quite prepared to be the first. Of course the cost was too high, but the clock cannot be put back. And what of a more obvious, immediate and painful example?

Are we to deduce that Greenberg believes that the Third Reich's genocide of Jews, Slavs and Romanies did not destroy its legitimacy?

One need not be surprised that Greenberg believes that while in theory the Palestinians have a right to self-determination, in practice they do not, as long as Israel — the most powerful state in the Middle East — feels threatened. For John Pawlikowski, a Christian professor of social ethics, "there should be no equation between one people threatened with extermination and one people fearful, at worst, of expansionism" — happily dismissing the genuine fears of many Palestinians concerning their physical safety. It is only when Jewish Israelis recognise that the threat they fear is the very one they themselves have inflicted on the majority of the Palestinians that they might recognise that a new basis of mutual recognition is necessary.

Some Christians feel that they should hesitate before conde-

mnising Israel, on account of guilt over the Holocaust. Other Jewish and Christian contributors refreshingly demand a more stringent attitude towards what is happening today. Yet for all Zionist contributors, Jewish and Christian, there is a fundamental demand that Palestinians accept the right of Israel to exist, if they wish to enjoy that self-determination themselves. This touches on another central feature of the moral problem. Israel's right to exist is not the same as the right of the Jewish community in Palestine to live in peace and security. Israel is the embodiment of Zionism, and Zionism is predicated upon a Jewish majority. The implication is clear: Jewish power and control, and, as Judah Magnes, rector of the Hebrew University, warned, "a home necessarily established on bayonets over a long period." This is where the profound immorality of Zionism lies.

Palestinians also wanted control, but Michael Lerner is disingenuous in simply claiming they

were "not a people of innocent bystanders, but a people that refused to accept the state of Israel in 1947." The Palestinians wanted "self-determination," as adumbrated in the still fresh U.N. Charter. As a majority they wanted to retain the integrity and control of geographical Palestine. As a minority the Jews did not, for equally obvious reasons. Today the roles are in part reversed, yet the Jews of Israel cannot accede to today's Palestinian ideal of a secular democratic state embracing both communities. As Mohammad Hallaj succinctly argues, the Palestinian claim to a state of their own is *sure de mieux*, a sad recognition that until the Jews of Israel are prepared to trust their Palestinian neighbours, neither party will be truly free: "if the two mini-states of partition reassure the Palestinians and Israelis, the democratic, non-sectarian state liberates them."

In the meantime, regardless of statements extorted from the PLO by the United States, most Palestinians will only accept Israeli legitimacy in their hearts

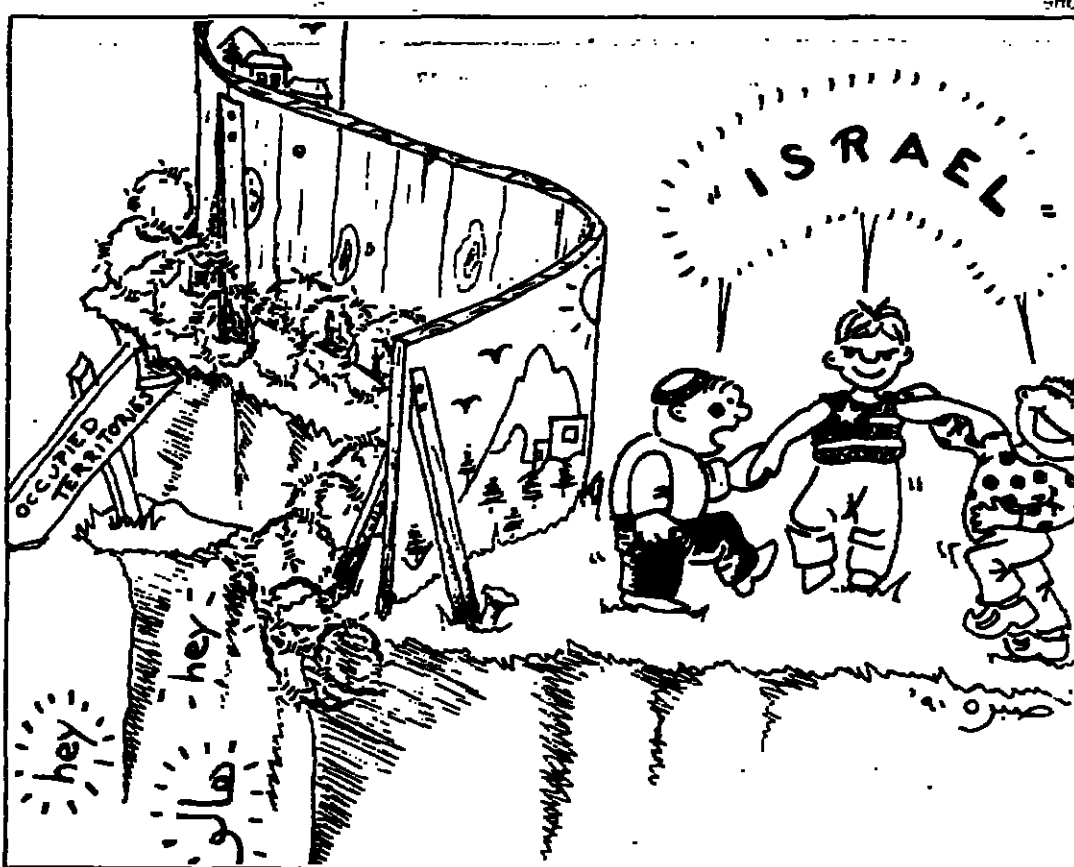
when Israeli Jews are able to accept Palestinian legitimacy. Until then, Israel's "right to exist" cannot have substantive meaning.

"Mutual recognition"

Yet it is on the discussion of mutual recognition that this book finds its greatest strength. Marc Ellis, a leading Jewish liberal theologian argues that Holocaust theology must be discarded, since it locks Jewish thinking in the past. "If our theology is not confronted and transformed, then the political solutions will be superficial and transitory... a two state solution is only the beginning of a long and involved process..."

Israelis and Palestinians are destined to share this small patch for the foreseeable future and so Jewish fulfilment is, Ellis argues, inextricably bound up with the fate of the Palestinian people. This does not mean a one-off agreement on the occupied territories, but enduring intercourse between the two communities. This is heady stuff, for it takes out of the morass of past rights and wrongs into the real realm of reconciliation, drawing new lines between those seeking to analyse reality and its moral implications impartially, and those still committed to waving their tribal banner.

No one can doubt the crucial hold of religious leaders in Palestine/Israel over their communities. As one pro-Israeli Christian theologian, Robert Brown, rightly states, "the moment of truth for the Palestinians will not be just the achievement of nationhood and a piece of real estate to validate the claim, but the way it subsequently relates to Israelis." Opinion polls suggest that as many Palestinians as Israelis in Palestine probably accept the expulsion of their adversaries as a solution. If there is seriousness about spiritual reconciliation, Palestinian Christian and Muslim leaders must be found to give voice to the moral challenges faced by the Palestinian people. American Jewish theologians, as this book shows, have made a start. Can we hope that indigenous Jewish, Christian and Muslim leaders can now take the debate further?



Pakistan divided over its post-war policies

Ahmed Rashid

THE civilian government and the army are at loggerheads again, this time over Pakistan's future military role in the Gulf. Nawaz Sharif's support for the coalition has been vindicated: the prime minister has emerged a stronger leader in controlling the anti-Americanism that continues to sweep the country. But, he now has to deal with an angry military.

In the usually volatile world of Pakistani politics, the resignation of two cabinet ministers due to the current wave of anti-American feeling, normally would have brought the government down. Yaqub Khan, the foreign minister, was forced to resign by the ruling Islamic Democratic Alliance because he defended the 11,000 Pakistani troops in Saudi Arabia, while Maulana Sattar Niazi, the fundamentalist minister of rural development, resigned after being criticised by Mr Sharif for not supporting the government's policies in the Gulf. It is a measure of Mr Sharif's newfound assertiveness that he forced Mr Niazi's resignation

and emerged unscathed from the controversy.

Pakistanis have been in the forefront of the wave of anti-Americanism sweeping the Muslim world since last August. Although public demonstrations against the pro-Western policy of the government have subsided, there is still anger with the U.S. on two counts — the indiscriminate destruction of Iraq and the cut-off of American aid to Pakistan last October because of its nuclear weapons programme. But many Pakistanis are hoping for an economic boom from the Gulf — jobs in Kuwait, sub-contracts from the multinationals and cheap oil from the Saudis.

There is some debate about Pakistan's role in the region. The civilian government wants to be part of the U.S.-Arab military-economic security arrangement. Mr Sharif's aides believe that Pakistan should continue to provide troops to the Saudis, cool down the anti-American rhetoric, improve relations with India and avoid antagonising the West by doing anything provocative like testing a nuclear device. Mr Sharif

has said repeatedly that he wants improved relations with the U.S., but says Pakistan will not give up its nuclear programme for the sake of U.S. aid.

The government's policies are supported by President Ghulam Ishaq Khan, the civil service, businessmen and Western embassies. Mr Shar-

if's position is also conditioned by self-preservation. "The government's ability to survive will depend on delivering economic benefits to the people rather than taking emotional decisions based on a vague anti-Americanism," said a Western diplomat.

A broad section of the military, influenced by General

Mirza Aslam Beg, the chief of army staff, have a different agenda. General Beg wants a "strategic consensus" with Iran, which will keep Western forces from the Gulf and set up an Islamic security arrangement. The army has initiated defence contracts with Iran: there have been appeals by General Beg's civilian support-

ers to share Pakistan's nuclear technology with Iran, a move that would unnervise Americans and Arabs.

The anti-Americanism in the army is rife with contradictions, because the army has been defending rather than criticising U.S. strategic interests in the region for 40 years. However, General Beg is now viewed as a "nationalist" by some left-wing parties and Islamic fundamentalists. The all-party conference, comprising these groups, which attacked government policy in the Gulf, reportedly had the army's backing. Behind the army's tilt to Iran are two other assumptions — that Pakistan should test a nuclear device and be prepared for a war with India because India may attempt to stave off political collapse by attacking Pakistan. To the army, the Iranian alliance will give Pakistan "the strategic depth" it does not have. To the civilians, such an alliance would isolate Pakistan from the West and the Arabs.

General Beg is due to retire in five months and the government hopes it can hold off any move by the military, until he goes — The Independent.



Economy on path to full recovery

By Debbie Lovatt
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Despite the heavy beating every sector of Jordan's economy has taken from the Gulf crisis, economic analysts are confident and optimistic that full recovery can, and will, be achieved.

On the surface, however, the immediate picture is bleak: Jordan has lost its main export market in Iraq and the Gulf states, tourism has dried up, unemployment has soared, remittances from expatriates have greatly declined, and oil supplies have been disrupted causing Jordan to import oil paid for in cash from Syria and Yemen rather than receive it from Iraq at a reduced rate in payment for debts. In addition, the country was flooded with returnees and refugees from the war theatre.

With the United Nations imposition and enforcement of international sanctions on Iraq following its invasion of Kuwait, Jordan's main export market was lost. Jordan could no longer rely on Iraq to represent its main market and was forced to look elsewhere for an outlet for its products. "We took it as a challenge and we are now exporting more goods to east and west Europe and Africa," said Dr. Ibrahim Badran, secretary general for the Ministry of Industry and Trade. In a way, economists say, the force majeure galvanised some exporters who might otherwise have taken little interest in exporting to places other than Iraq.

Imports were also affected by the zealous enforcement of sanctions by U.S.-led allies — Jordan-bound ships were harassed and war risk insurance premium rocketed. The down side of this was that as importing became more difficult and less economically viable, manufacturing industries ran low on vital raw materials making a finished product for export unachievable. The positive side, however, was that Jordan unwittingly found it was gradually achieving one

of the aims of the adjustment programme agreed upon by Jordan two years ago with the World Bank and International Monetary Fund: a reduction in imports.

The tourist trade halted as travel companies cancelled trips to the region due to fears that Jordan would be embroiled in war and that Westerners would be less than welcome because of the political situation. A Ministry of Tourism report released in February this year estimates the loss in tourism receipts for the seven-month crisis period at JD 176.5 million.

Tourism promotion efforts are underway in Scandinavia, Italy, Germany and Spain for 1991. "These countries have always been a strong market and tend to lead the way in tourism," said a senior official at the ministry.

At the same time, domestic tourism will grow as "more people are expected to be spending their holidays in Jordan rather than Europe or America this year due to the problems with the economy, and hotels in Aqaba are already full for the Eid and Easter," said the tourism official striking an optimistic note.

Of all the problems the Gulf crisis left in its wake, the most visible is unemployment. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) estimates the unemployment rate to be at least 20 per cent. Independent analysts believe this is a conservative figure and estimate the rate to be closer to 30 per cent.

As the economy struggled to absorb the multi-faceted impact of the Gulf crisis, many people found themselves out of work. "Companies reduced working hours and staff, and production dropped to a third, or a quarter, of its pre-crisis level," said Dr. Badran.

"The government is encouraging investors and entrepreneurs to set up their own businesses. The (Industry and Trade) Ministry offers free advice, and loan facilities can be arranged through banks and

other financial institutions," said the secretary general.

Dr. Saleh Khasawneh, secretary general of the Labour Ministry, said: "Morale remains high. Businessmen and employees are aware of what is going on and many workers have taken a cut in wages. This is illegal, but we turn a blind eye to it as it is the logical thing to do; so we don't intervene. We hope this situation is short term and that it will soon clear up and go back to normal."

Steps are being taken to reduce the number of illegal foreign workers in Jordan to enable employers to offer job priority to Jordanians.

Dr. Khasawneh explained that "if foreign workers, for example Egyptians, who were taking a low wage leave the country and are replaced by Jordanians and they take the same low wage we don't intervene. We leave things to market forces. Wages may vary. But we do encourage fair wages."

The return of nearly a quarter of a million expatriates led to a huge reduction in remittances and put an extra burden on an already strained economy. "It is too early to tell how much has actually been lost through remittances. Due to the war no-one was transferring money," Dr. Khasawneh said.

Jordanians returning from Iraq and Kuwait in particular are not only compounding the problem of unemployment, but also contributing to rising poverty in the country.

Until the political situation clarifies it will not be possible to know whether returnees are planning to stay in Jordan or live elsewhere. "Many people have not made up their minds yet whether to stay," said Dr. Badran.

Aid agencies have been over-stretched to extend help to all those now in need. Expatriate workers used to send money to less well-off relatives. The return of family members and the end of an

income for themselves and their relatives has pushed struggling families immediately "below the poverty line," according to UNICEF.

The first casualty of poverty is a proper balanced diet and a reduced ability to pay doctors' fees or costs of medicine. UNICEF cites horrifying stories of family members taking it in turns to eat — one day the father and boys eat, the next day the mother and girls eat. Schoolteachers talk of listless pupils unable to concentrate in class as they have not eaten well for days.

Pregnant and breast-feeding women are unable to offer the best start in life for their unborn and newly born children without a proper diet. Doctors report more miscarriages and underweight births than prior to Aug. 2 and anaemia is high.

In short, according to UNICEF's regional director for the Middle East and North Africa, Richard Reid, "what the Gulf crisis has done to Jordan is make it instantly a less developed country from a middle income country."

Yet, officials remain optimistic that the Kingdom will recover its former strength and go beyond it. "I am sure we have the capability to overcome the present difficulties," said Dr. Badran, the Ministry of Industry and Trade Secretary General.

Dr. Badran feels that "the Gulf crisis has created a feeling that people have to work and produce more, save more and consume less. The crisis has also developed the understanding that unemployment cannot be handled except through increased production at all levels."

Regardless of how optimistic and capable Jordan is of working hard to overcome the present economic setback, the adverse effects of such a sudden disruption in a country's development are bound to stay in society for a long time.

In the words of Dr. Badran, even though the Gulf crisis has been "so damaging, Jordan has to stand up to the challenge."



Veiled women gather en masse at Abdullah Ibn Al Hussein Mosque in Amman in January to donate to Iraq's cause (File photo)

The veil and the east: What it means and why women wear it

By Leila Hassanian

IN STARK contrast to the once fashionable miniskirt, Egyptian women today appear everywhere in the veil. Nor is the phenomenon limited to Egypt alone. It produced political upheaval in France when Muslim girls wore the hejab and long dresses to school.

France, the home of liberty, fraternity and equality, waged a fierce attack on those girls and their families to prevent them from applying their religious beliefs to their personal lives on the grounds that the French educational system is secular. The emergence of what is called Islamic fundamentalism — seemingly strengthened by events in the Gulf — has also provoked further debate on the issue.

Indeed, the veil in modern times has been subjected to extended analysis, sympathy and criticism. In the West, it is seen as part of a reactionary trend, particularly by those who support women's liberation. On a broader front, it is regarded as an anti-secularist feature of fundamentalism, a tide of religious fanaticism that is sweeping over the region and destroying attempts to modernise Arab society.

Since the mid 1970s, Egypt has witnessed a marked increase in public expressions of religious mores and there has been a great deal of speculation as to the political, economic and social reasons for this. Egypt over the past decade and a half has gone through a far-reaching socioeconomic change that has had a profound effect on the lives of its citizens. Hundreds of thousands of Egyptians migrated to the oil rich Gulf area in the hope of acquiring commodities that are perceived as a sign of modernisation and a Western middle-class lifestyle. Conspicuous wealth cropped up overnight and is ostentatiously displayed by those who have it.

The results have not all been good. There has been a widening of the gap separating the "haves" from the "have nots," fueling feelings of deprivation and malcontent. The emphasis on materialism also has rocked the traditional foundations of Egyptian society, including ideology, security and a general acceptance of what life offers. To regain this lost contentment and to fight the feelings of alienation many people re-emphasise religious bonds.

So why do young, educated women in Egypt wear the veil? The reasons are many. Some do it out of religious duty. Islam prescribes a female dress that deemphasises a woman's attractiveness. For some women, then, the veil is regarded as a protection from male harassment in modern life's daily encounters.

It is argued by some that the veil, besides being a religious obligation, has also an economic advantage for lower-middle and middle-class women who cannot compete in or afford a consumption-oriented lifestyle. Conservative dress — including the veil — is a way to dress oneself decently without having to spend a great deal of money.

Although this reasoning does not apply generally, many women may be searching for happiness and deeper values through a more thorough application of religious codes. Two knowledgeable Western women, formerly known for following the latest trends, recently surprised friends and acquaintances by donning the veil.

Why? Said one of them: "At first, these veiled women down stairs, who even covered their faces, were an object of amusement to me and my sister. Curiosity was the reason for occasional short talks and visits

to the neighbours. What we found was quite astonishing to us. These were women at peace with themselves and their life despite the many problems they were facing daily."

In contrast, she and her sister, both having a much higher standard of living, rarely experienced such contentment, even though they were doing whatever they thought would bring them happiness. This discovery, they said, was for them a turning point.

An Egyptian upper-middle class woman who now wears the veil, even though neither her mother nor her grandmother did, likens Western trends in Egypt to small waves in an ocean, making their impact, but finally disappearing. "We kept westerising for generations, but we stopped short before the sexual revolution. Maybe in the next wave we will go too far."

In the last decades, Egyptian women were faced with harsh economic conditions that spawned a growing feminist movement. The fervor of this movement, which reached its apex in the 1960 and 1970s, now faces a perplexed, confused and exhausted client. Inflation, unemployment and increased expectations are a heavy burden on modern women. They have to struggle to keep things from falling apart.

Many women work outside the home in order to fulfill some of their families' and their own ambitions. They often end up as jacks of all trades and masters of none. Nervous, exhausted and unsatisfied, they see their children neglected, their marriages strained and their houses bereft of spirit.

A veiled woman says: "I am no longer interested in acquiring every new object on the

market, most of which falls under the category of luxury goods and exaggerated consumerism." To a certain extent, the veil is a rejection of the consumer society. It is a call for moderation, a return to real necessities without all the frills and trimmings.

The return to Islam, then, is for some a way of emerging from the existing chaos. It is a hope for correcting things that have gotten out of hand. And what is seen by outsiders as a backing away from modernity and secularism is for many Egyptians a way to protect what is left of their traditions and to find indigenous solutions to their problems.

Traditions are often too extensive to be put away, half forgotten in a dark attic at the expense of a flashier, more intriguing life that beckoned from the West. Having experienced some of the psychological wear and tear of the never-ending quest for materialistic aspirations, many Egyptians are climbing to their attic and rediscovering the "good old values."

This religious revival, which is in part a cultural revival, should not be labeled prematurely as reactionary and/or anti-secularist. It is an attempt to shape an indigenous cultural pattern that can be simultaneously assimilated with modern technological advancement without losing a deeper, more perceptive existence.

The veil also represents a demand for a different outlook on life and living necessities. It is a sign of discontentment with the current state of affairs. These women are trying to shape in part this new society, one built on a perceived religious ideal. They should not be criticised for trying to live a life that for them is more comfortable and satisfying — Middle East Times.

Relief

(Continued from page 1)

figures as to what vaccines are needed and how much is needed in terms of water purification material. In the meantime temperatures in Baghdad and across Iraq are rising and the threat of spreading epidemics related to a breakdown in hygienic conditions is growing by the day.

While any visitors have remarked that on the surface many parts of Baghdad seem to remain physically untouched by the allied bombings, looks can nevertheless be deceptive. In Baghdad this seems to be the case. No home has in fact remained untouched. No family unharmed, if not through death in the war then through malnutrition or the fear of disease: new-found poverty evidently threatens the Iraqi middle class. As one official puts it, "Iraq is a country of 18 million victims of war."

The economic standstill has brought about a new level of poverty, and getting the country back on the road means massive aid, which does not seem to be forthcoming. Furthermore, there is a lot of speculation as to whether Iraq will have any say over its own income and natural resources in the light of the ceasefire resolution that is being debated at the U.N.

Dr. Qaysi says he fears that the resolution would include clauses which would permanently prevent Iraq from asking for reparations from the allies for their use of excessive force against the country rendering it completely in a "pre-industrial revolution" state.

In a pessimistic note Dr. Qaysi told visiting delegates visiting Baghdad last week that he feared that Iraq's oil output, its price and actual use of the revenues would be entirely controlled by the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council. He added that the U.N. might even ban international courts from hearing Iraq's case if Baghdad wished to pursue the issue of excessive use of force by the allies.

The lack of total control of Iraq's own finances would only accelerate the boundless black markets already set up by sidewalk vendors all over Baghdad. Lines of up to 200 people could be seen in front of bakeries, and meat is extremely difficult to find anywhere. The lack of water seems to be even

more frightening than the shortage of food. Many neighbourhoods smell of sewage and only a small minority of the population has constant water supply.

A city that used to use 9,000 megawatts of electricity has had to do with 700 megawatts for more than two months now.

But Iraqis know that without outside help survival may be a difficult question under the present circumstances. "The U.N. resolution which will set the terms of the ceasefire may be another Treaty of Versailles and there will be nothing we can do about except sign it," Dr. Qaysi said.

Noting that Iraq was dependent on the outside world in order to repair its infrastructure, he said if the ceasefire resolution would be as bad as he feared Iraq would be in a state of "permanent human bondage."

In a final note, Dr. Qaysi told the visiting delegates that in his lifetime (he is 53) he did not expect that Iraq would recover even 10 per cent of the infrastructure capabilities that

it had up to Jan. 17. "It's not possible to imagine what happened here simply because it's unimaginable," he said.

What happened during the 42 days of war, said Dr. Qaysi, was the equivalent to a mafia killing. "The allies killed the victim and burned the corpse, so that no-one can prove there was a killing and the murderer goes free and the crime remains unsolved."

Hammadi

(Continued from page 1)

television speech in mid-March that his government would draft a new constitution including democratic reforms.

Dr. Hammadi referred to the March 16 speech, saying a "draft constitution... a press law, a parties law" already have been prepared. But he added reforms were being delayed by the rebellion.

The press and parties laws would apparently govern the news media and the relationship of other parties to the ruling Arab Baath Socialist Party.

Dr. Hammadi said his government "will work to take all possible and practical steps to launch the process of democratic reform."

Iraqi radio also reported Saturday night that the revolutionary Command Council had declared an amnesty for members of the armed forces who "return to the national ranks in the northern part of the country."

The radio added that "any of these members who brings with him a weapon will be honoured when they report to the military units in their areas."

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Mubarak wants Egyptians to cut outrageous consumption

CAIRO (R) — President Hosni Mubarak warned Egyptians Saturday they must not expect an economic bonanza for their country's role in the Gulf crisis but would have to cut consumption instead.

"The Gulf crisis does not mean cash will start flowing to us from every direction and there will be prosperity," Mubarak told the national news agency MENA.

"There is no prosperity in the whole world. If we want to live an honourable life we must not rely on the outside to provide our food ... if anyone thinks otherwise he is wrong," he said after a ceremony to inaugurate Cairo's eighth Nile bridge.

Since the Gulf crisis erupted in August the United States and Egypt's Gulf allies have written

off around \$14 billion in debt. Officials say Gulf states sent an extra \$2 billion in cash grants.

"If we have received aid we must exploit it for development," Mubarak told MENA. "We must work and decrease our outrageous consumption."

The Paris Club of Western creditor nations has indicated it would write off a large part of Cairo's remaining \$36 billion foreign debt if it agreed on an economic reform programme with the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

An IMF team is in Cairo to negotiate the final details of a programme economists say will entail painful austerity measures on the way to creating a market economy.

Mubarak said domestic pet-

roleum consumption had increased so much in the last eight years it had become "ugly."

A major IMF demand has been that Egypt raise the prices it charges locally for electricity, petrol and other forms of energy to help cut a huge government budget deficit.

"If we receive aid or support from someone it will be to develop ourselves ... we should not think that others will throw their money at us," Mubarak said. "If that happens it will not be in the form of salaries but as projects to create work and increase production."

The 500-metre Rod Al Farag bridge which Mubarak inaugurated links two sections of a ring road being built to relieve traffic congestion in Cairo.

IMF urges Cyprus to exercise monetary, fiscal restraint

NICOSIA (R) — The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has urged the Cyprus government to exercise monetary and fiscal restraint. It said the budget deficit was running at more than three times the level of two years ago.

In a report following its annual review of the Cyprus economy the IMF said "restraint should be the first order of priority in the conduct of financial policy in Cyprus today."

It warned that the "widening of the budget deficit was going too far," rising from 1.5 per cent of GDP (gross domestic product) in 1989 to a projected 5 to 5.5 per cent in 1991.

"With the public debt rising in relation to GDP, and with inflationary pressures likely to worsen, the economy would become more vulnerable to shocks and its balance more difficult to sustain," it said.

The public debt ratio rose from

48.8 per cent of GDP in 1989 to a projected 58 per cent in 1991. Inflation is estimated at six per cent.

The IMF's recommendations include a check in the rise of the wage bill, higher excise taxes on tobacco, alcohol and petrol prices, a 20 per cent excise tax on luxury goods and implementation of value added tax as early as possible in 1992.

While praising the government's "damage containment" policy in the wake of the Gulf crisis, the IMF warned that the expansion of liquidity was excessive.

It said removal of a nine per cent interest rate ceiling imposed by law and the extension of central bank supervision and control to the credit co-operatives remain the principal challenges the authorities confront in the monetary area.

Seoul suggests Saudi oil company buy into Korean refinery

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — South Korea has suggested to Aramco of Saudi Arabia that it buy into Ssangyong Oil Refining Co. instead of seeking to set up a joint venture refinery.

The Korean Economic Daily, quoting official sources, reported that Energy and Resources Minister Lee Hee-II made the proposal in a letter to Saudi Oil Minister Hisham Nazer in connection with Aramco's earlier bid to invest in a new refinery.

The ministry declined to comment on the report.

The paper said Ssangyong has contacted state-run Aramco about the government proposal, but that it was not known how the Saudis reacted.

Ssangyong officials refused to comment but said the firm was considering an increase of its capital, which now amounts to 130 billion won (about \$180 million).

Last January, Aramco applied to the Seoul government for a

licence to set up a \$700 million joint venture to operate an oil refinery with Ssangyong.

Lee has said the request would be turned down under a government policy that bans new refineries in an effort to protect the domestic oil industry. There are currently five local refineries in operation.

In his letter, the paper said, Lee reiterated the government's disapproval of a new refinery but indicated Seoul would favourably consider investment by Aramco into Ssangyong in consideration of the friendly relations between the two countries.

Saudi Arabia has been a major oil supplier and an important construction market for Korea. Korean contractors are eager to participate in the Gulf nation's postwar reconstruction efforts.

Ssangyong Oil Refining Co., owned by the Ssangyong Group, operates a refinery capable of processing to 190,000 barrels of crude oil a day.

Hungary plans to switch to market economy within coming two years

THE HAGUE (R) — Hungarian Finance Minister Mihalt Kupa has said his country planned to switch to a market economy within two years and was adopting EC norms to ease its eventual entry into the Community.

"Within two years we would like to complete our adjustment to a market economy," Kupa told a news conference in the Hague after meeting Dutch officials and bank representatives.

"In this respect we are implementing the norms of the

European Community," Kupa, who met EC officials in Brussels before coming to the Netherlands, said without giving details.

He said he expected a five-year association agreement between Hungary and the EC would be signed this year although his country was still seeking better terms for trade in agriculture, steel and textiles.

Kupa said he hoped it would be the last association treaty before Hungary would gain entry into the 12-nation bloc.

Asian workers hope to return to Mideast

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka (AP) — Tens of thousands of Asian workers driven from the Middle East by the Gulf war are eager to return now that the fighting is over.

"I'm broke and plan to go back as soon as possible," said Mohammed Rafideen, 32, who fled Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, after Iraqi missiles hit the city.

Gulf countries, rich in oil but poor in manpower, have relied on Asians, Palestinians, Egyptians and other foreigners to do the ordinary work that keeps their countries running.

Several poor nations that supply workers suffered economic disruption when the war wiped out most of the jobs and workers started returning and stopped sending money home.

Rafideen is one of about 280,000 workers who returned to Sri Lanka during the crisis that began with Iraq's invasion of Kuwait on Aug. 2, according to foreign ministry figures.

More than 220,000 Sri Lankans remained in Gulf countries, but most lost their jobs because of the war, the ministry said.

Filipinos also look forward to working in the Gulf region again. "I want to go back ... because pay in the Middle East is five times bigger than here," said Anacleto de Prado, a 46-year-old with four children who worked in Iraq.

Before the war, workers from the Philippines sent home an average of \$1.5 billion a year, a

major source of hard currency. Of about 500,000 Filipinos who worked in the Gulf, 30,000 returned home, said the overseas workers' welfare administration.

About 300,000 Bangladeshis worked in the Gulf before Iraq seized Kuwait, and sent home about \$327 million a year. Most of the money stopped with the invasion, making things even worse for one of the world's poorest countries.

India, whose foreign exchange reserves are at an all-time low, lost the remittances from 130,000 of its 170,000 workers in Kuwait and Iraq. It spent \$157 million to evacuate most of its workers from those countries and now is providing special loans to help fly many of them back.

Sri Lanka, a poor tea-producing country off the tip of India, was among the most dependent on remittances. More than three per cent of its population worked in the Gulf region. Over the past decade, Sri Lankan workers sent home an average of \$135 million a year, the central bank reported. That equaled 7.5 per cent of national income in this fiscal year.

Higher oil prices and a decline in tea exports further strained an inflation-ridden economy.

Thousands of workers like Rafideen flock to the offices of recruiting firms to ask about new jobs in the Middle East. The government is giving financial help to job seekers who cannot afford the expenses of returning

to the Gulf, said Gamlath Premachandra, the labour minister. Premachandra said he also had asked the International Organisation of Migration, a U.N. agency, for financial assistance in returning at least 50,000 Sri Lankans employed in Kuwait before the war.

Newspapers have earned an increasing number of advertisements for workers from Saudi Arabian companies.

Sri Lanka remained neutral in the war. It provided refuelling facilities to U.S. warships and aircraft for the Gulf, however, and hopes to be rewarded.

Bernard Perera, director of Lagodon Ltd., the largest foreign recruitment company in Sri Lanka, said Saudi Arabia and Kuwait may blacklist people from several countries.

Some Western diplomats in Saudi Arabia have said the government was not preparing a blacklist, but that most Saudi sponsors of foreign workers were unsympathetic to nations that opposed the anti-Iraq alliance.

Philippine officials hope their workers will be favoured. The Philippines sent a 20-member medical mission to Saudi Arabia, and the Filipinos treated some of the allied soldiers wounded in an Iraqi missile attack in Dhahran.

At the end of a two-week visit to Saudi Arabia last month, Labour Secretary Robin Torres said he expects the Gulf countries to hire 200,000 more Filipinos in the next two years.

India asks donors to help stave off possible default

NEW DELHI (R) — India is seeking emergency aid from foreign aid donors to stave off possible default as it copes with a worsening fiscal crisis and unprecedented political instability, officials and diplomats said.

India needs fresh funds to avoid rescheduling of its debt because of perilously low reserves of foreign exchange. "There is cause for concern, but no cause for panic," an official spokesman has told reporters.

India has asked the United States to use its good offices to secure immediate German and Japanese assistance. Foreign Secretary Mukund Dubey told Indian reporters in Washington. The three countries are India's main aid donors.

Dubey said he raised the issue in talks with Secretary of State James Baker. India had directly approached Tokyo and Bonn as well, he said.

"All our efforts are to avoid the kind of situation when we have to ask for rescheduling loans," the United News of India quoted him as saying.

Financial institutions, worried about India's mounting foreign debt and ballooning deficits, have all but cut off lending to New Delhi, leaving few alternatives to debt rescheduling, bankers said.

Lenders have been made skittish by the resignation of Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar's gov-

ernment, possibly inconclusive elections in May, and the postponement of the 1991/92 fiscal year budget (April-March) for political reasons, diplomats said.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has suspended negotiations on a \$2 billion loan. "They're not going to have IMF talks until there's elections, a new government and a full budget. Period," one diplomat said.

The annual meeting of India's aid donors, due in June in Paris, has been postponed because of the uncertainties, he said. Last year, India's 13 country donors gave \$6.5 billion.

Standard and Poor's Corp. earlier last month downgraded India's long-term debt to BBB-minus from BBB and placed India's ratings on credit watch with negative implications.

The U.S.-based credit ratings agency said India's fiscal and other policies were being sidetracked by continued political dissension which has led to the collapse of two governments in the past 15 months.

World Bank figures show India staggering under a foreign debt of \$70 billion, third highest in the developing world.

Foreign exchange reserves, bolstered by a \$1.79 billion loan from the IMF in January, stood at \$2.2 billion on March 8 after reaching a low of \$750 million in mid-January.

But finance ministry officials said the IMF money would run out by the end of June.

"This is probably India's worst fiscal crisis since independence (in 1947)," said S.L. Rao, direc-

tor of the National Council of Applied Economic Research.

Rao said India might ask aid donors to waive requirements that New Delhi match funds for projects. "We're sitting on a substantial amount of unused aid, around \$14 billion."

India last month took drastic action to cut imports because it lacked the hard cash to pay for them. The central bank banned foreign exchange sales to importers of capital goods and severely tightened credit requirements for other imports.

"Large parts of Indian industry will suddenly be crippled for want of raw materials, scores of projects will be stopped in mid-stream," said the Economics Times in an editorial.

The newspaper, which reflects the views of India's business establishment, said the central bank was forced to use "economic instruments of unprecedented savagery" because politicians had let the economy drift towards disaster.

India has taken increasingly desperate steps to ward off default on its short-term obligations, as lenders grow ever more tight-fisted, bankers said.

India revalued its gold assets in October to reflect international prices after the first downgrading of its credit rating by Standard and Poor's.

The Reserve Bank of India, the central bank, then sold around \$750 million in foreign securities between November and February to pay for imports, said one Western diplomat, likening the action to "selling the family silver."

AMMAN EXCHANGE RATES

Sunday, March 31, 1991		Central Bank official rates			
Buy	Sell	Japanese yen (for 100)	483.2	486.1	
680.0	684.0	Dutch guilder	355.6	357.7	
1186.9	1194.0	Swedish crown	110.0	110.7	
400.2	402.6				
469.9	472.7	Italian lira (for 100)	53.8	54.1	
118.3	119.0	Belgian franc (for 10)	194.0	195.2	

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KARATE KID II
Show: 12:30, 3:30, 8:30, 10:30 p.m.

Cinema Tel: 699238
PLAZA
TIGER ON THE BEAT
Show: 12:30, 3:15, 8:00, 10:00 p.m.

Cinema Tel: 677420
CONCORD
Duraid Laham — Madlin Tabar
in
Kafroon
Show: 3:30, 8:30, 10:30 p.m.

Cinema Tel: 675571
NIJOM
Adel Adham & Najwa Fuad
in
THE REVENGE
(Arabic)
12:30, 3:30, 8:30, 10:30 p.m.

SABIC reports slight dip in 1990 profit

NICOSIA (R) — The Saudi Basic Industries Corporation (SABIC) said it made a three billion riyal (\$800 million) profit in 1990, slightly down on 1989. The industrial conglomerate made a profit of 3.37 billion riyals (\$898 million) in 1989 and a record 3.68 billion riyals (\$980 million) profit in 1988.

Saudi Arabian Industry and Electricity Minister Abdul Aziz Abdullah Al Zamel said SABIC had achieved good results despite fluctuations in petrochemical markets and the Gulf crisis.

The official Saudi Press Agency, monitored in Cyprus, quoted

Zamel as saying SABIC produced 13 million tonnes of goods in 1990, eight per cent up on 1989. SABIC products include steel, petrochemicals, plastics and fertilisers.

Zamel, who is also managing director of SABIC, said the increase in the company's production would boost various Saudi industrial sectors.

Ibrahim Bin Abdullah Bin Salamah, deputy managing director of SABIC, said the company had approved a one billion riyal (\$267 million) total dividend payout to shareholders.

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ANNOUNCEMENT

Embassy of the S.F.R. of Yugoslavia - Amman

All Yugoslav citizens temporary working and residing in Jordan are requested to contact the Yugoslav Embassy as soon as possible for details about the Census of the population of Yugoslavia which is to be held from April 1st till April 15th 1991.
The Embassy is open from Saturday till Thursday from 0900 - 1200 hours.

ports



Arantxa Sanchez Vicario

Seles, Graf to meet in hardcourt final

SAN ANTONIO, Texas (Agencies) — Steffi Graf got her wish Saturday with a semifinals victory in the U.S. Women's Hardcourt Tennis Championships that set up a showdown in Sunday's final against Monica Seles, her successor as world number one.

Seles, the top seed, beat third-seeded Manuela Maleeva-Fragniere 6-2, 6-3, 6-1, while second-seeded Graf crushed France's Julie Halard 6-0, 6-1.

"I played here hoping to have a final against her (Seles)," said Graf, who took a wild-card entry into the tournament.

The German, who held the top spot in the women's rankings for a record 186 successive weeks before giving way to Seles earlier this month, quickly tried to downplay the showdown.

"I just want to play well. I want to relax and have fun," she said. "I just want to do well and be satisfied with myself."

Graf, who has not won a tournament in five months, has lost her two matches against the 17-year-old Yugoslav.

Seles hopes she is in better form when she faces Graf.

"I just couldn't find my rhythm," Seles said after her eighth victory without a defeat to Maleeva-Fragniere, ranked 11th. "My return was just not working today. I didn't play my game. But it's good that I came back."

Seles, who has won the Australian Open and Players Championship already in 1991, broke Maleeva-Fragniere twice on her way to winning the opening set.

But, in the second set, Maleeva-Fragniere, who lost in last year's final here to Seles, used excellent ball placement and well-timed drop shots to even the match at 1-1.

Neither player could hold serve in the first three games of the third set as Seles led 2-1. Seles held in a love game to take a 3-1 lead and was well on her way to

victory after Maleeva-Fragniere dropped serve again in the next game.

Graf had considerably less trouble with her opponent, ranked 54th in the world. "It was a good match for me," Graf said.

"There were not too many mistakes from my side."

Both Graf and Seles downplayed the importance of Sunday's match.

"It will just mean that she or I were better that day," Seles said. "I will have to serve and return better and be more aggressive than I was today."

"It's not winning a tournament or winning against someone special," Graf said. "It's me I'm concerned about. I just want to do well."

"I feel better day by day," said Graf, who won the first two U.S. Women's Hardcourt Championships when the tournament was revived in 1988. She missed last year's tournament because of a thumb injury.

Fernandez, Sukova advance in Florida

TARPON SPRINGS, Florida (AP) — Gigi Fernandez and Helena Sukova rallied from a 5-0 first-set deficit to beat Kathy Jordan and Liz Smylie 4-6, 6-4, 6-1 in the semifinals of the \$200,000 Light N' Lively Doubles Saturday.

In other semifinal, the Soviet duo of Natalia Zvereva and Larisa Savchenko polished off Robin White and Arantxa Sanchez Vicario 6-1, 6-3.

Fernandez of Puerto Rico and Sukova of Czechoslovakia take on Zvereva and Savchenko in Sunday's final at Innisbrook resort. The winners earn \$75,000.

Jordan and Smylie could do no wrong for much of the opening set. Smylie of Australia served and returned well while her American teammate picked off balls at the net.

France beats Albania 5-0

PARIS (R) — Two goals apiece from Franck Sauze and the inevitable Jean-Pierre Papin carried France to a comfortable 5-0 victory over a dispirited Albania in a European Championship soccer qualifier Saturday.

The result maintained the confident French team's two-year unbeaten record and left them perched on top of Group 1 with maximum points from five matches and with eyes firmly fixed on next year's finals in Sweden.

Sauze and Papin netted their goals in the first half and Albanian keeper Blendi Nallbani added to his side's misery by scoring a bizarre own goal.

Albania had little stomach for a fight after losing three of their 16-strong squad en route to Paris. Defectors during an unscheduled overnight stop in Switzerland.

They had even less when Sauze blasted home a direct free kick from more than 25 metres after only 35 seconds of the match.

Sauze, who thundered that effort just inside the right-hand post, showed his versatility by scoring with a second free kick.

A Papin penalty after Rudi Vata felled winger Christophe Cocard in the box in the 33rd minute and a Papin header from a Cocard cross nine minutes later had the match well and truly settled by the break.

With little incentive left, France eased off in the second period but the hapless Nallbani gave them a fifth when he tried to palm away a high cross and pushed it instead over his goal line.

Both Graf and Seles downplayed the importance of Sunday's match.

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Kankkunen leads the Safari Rally

NAIROBI (Agencies) — Finland's Juha Kankkunen took the lead early Sunday in the 39th Safari Rally after Carlos Sainz of Spain abandoned the contest due to mechanical failure.

Kankkunen, driving a Lancia Integrale, had accumulated 1 hour, 51 minutes and 10 seconds in penalty points halfway through the fifth leg at the northern town of Maralal.

Sweden's Mikael Ericsson was second in a Toyota Celica GT4, with 2:12:15 in penalty points.

Argentina's Jorge Recalde, driving a Lancia, was third with 2:22:08 in penalty points.

The winner of the race is the driver with the least time lost.

Rally officials said Sainz, who had dominated the race since late Wednesday, quit shortly after the start in Eldoret of the 941-kilometre fifth leg.

But the officials had scant details on the fate of Sainz's GT4, saying only that the engine blew.

Of the 57 starters in Nairobi Wednesday, only 27 were still racing at 0830 GMT Sunday. The others had succumbed to rough terrain, quagmires, mechanical failures and accidents.

The six-day 1,500-kilometre endurance race is divided into six legs, which are in turn split into sectors. Each sector ends with a control point.

Drivers are allowed specified time to cover each sector. Penalty points are calculated in the time drivers are late reaching control points.

The race is fourth in the World Rally Championship circuit and counts toward the drivers' and manufacturers' title.

Traditionally, the race is held during Easter holidays when the annual long rains normally start in this East African nation. The route runs over some of the worst roads in the world.

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HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR MONDAY APRIL 1, 1991

Soviet Georgia defies Kremlin with referendum on independence

TBILISI, Soviet Union (R) — Voters in Georgia flocked to polling stations Sunday in a referendum on whether to break with 70 years of Communist rule and restore the southern republic's short-lived independence.

With nationalist feeling running high during the past two years in the trans-Caucasian republic, the outcome appeared to be a foregone conclusion.

Georgian President Zviad Gamsakhurdia has predicted an overwhelming majority favouring independence as part of his step-by-step approach of restoring the independent 1918-1921 Georgian state which was crushed by the Red Army.

"It will be a great majority, maybe more than 80 per cent," Gamsakhurdia said after voting with his wife in Tbilisi, the republic's tree-lined capital. "It will be a great victory in our fight for independence."

Gamsakhurdia came to power last year in elections that swept the Communists from power.

He said his top priorities within two years would be to "change this old, sorry economic system. More privatisation and more contact with Western economies."

Election officials said there had been a heavy early turnout in bright sunshine in the tree-lined streets of Tbilisi. Many voters carried leafy branches marking Palm Sunday — celebrated by the

Orthodox Church a week later than many other Christian faiths. "A lot of people of various nationalities are coming in. Voting is more active than in previous elections," said Natela Tetvazde, an electoral official in one Tbilisi district.

"I don't doubt 100 per cent here are for independence."

Polls were to remain open until late evening, with first results expected Monday afternoon.

The 3.4 million voters were asked on ballot papers printed in seven languages: "Do you agree that the state independence of Georgia should be restored on the basis of the independence act of May 26, 1918?"

Georgia was one of six Soviet republics to boycott President Mikhail Gorbachev's country-wide referendum on March 17 on preserving the Soviet Union as a "renewed federation."

Gorbachev, who portrayed the 58 per cent "yes" vote as an endorsement of his vision of a looser union, has warned of chaos and civil war if the Soviet Union begins to splinter.

But the outcome did nothing to calm separatist passions. Three of the other boycotting republics — Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in the Baltic region — have held their own "opinion polls" which returned majorities in favour of restoring their pre-World War II independence.

Gamsakhurdia, who came to power last year in elections that swept the Communists out of office, said Saturday that secession depended on "the stance of Western nations and the readiness of the central Soviet government to negotiate."

He said "certain political steps" would be taken — expected to include an independent army and foreign policy and a separate currency.

Also on the eve of polling, Gorbachev asked Gamsakhurdia to act to end violence in South Ossetia, a mountainous corner of his republic where at least 50 people have died in months of unrest. Soviet media say tension is mounting there, with armed gangs ringing large towns.

South Ossetia, like Abkhazia on the Black Sea, has a considerable non-Georgian population and both areas have made clear they wish to remain part of the Soviet Union should Georgia secede.

Newspapers in the republic, generally under the control of Georgia's nationalist authorities, called for a big "yes" vote.

"Let us vote for an independent Georgia," read the banner headline in Republic of Georgia, the largest Georgian-language daily.

Alongside it was a poem dedicated to Gamsakhurdia on his 52nd birthday, which he cele-

brated Sunday.

Also prominent were pictures of Soviet soldiers breaking up the peaceful April 9, 1989, separatist rally in Tbilisi in which 20 people were killed. That tragedy is widely viewed as the catalyst for the surge in nationalist sentiment.

Seventy per cent of the republic's five million residents are ethnic Georgians, but many non-Georgians questioned on the street also favoured independence.

"We shall vote for an independent Georgia," said Ludmila Shalagurova. "I was born in the Ukraine but I have lived here for about 30 years. I think each republic should be independent."

But Gamsakhurdia dismissed Gorbachev's appeal as interference in his republic's affairs.

"Gorbachev is the main reason for that bloodshed," he told reporters. "It is his policy and it is directed against us. It is the Kremlin's war against Georgia because we are fighting for independence."

Violence erupted in South Ossetia late last year when Georgia's parliament abolished the area's autonomous status. The region, like Abkhazia on the Black Sea, has a considerable non-Georgian population and both areas have made clear they wish to remain part of the Soviet Union should Georgia secede.

Soviet miners threaten to flood mines

MOSCOW (AP) — Striking miners from southern Siberia threatened Sunday to flood coal mines, permanently damaging or closing them, unless lawmakers of the Soviet Union's biggest republic meet their economic and political demands.

Russian parliamentarians were startled by the threat from Anatoly Moliga, a strike leader in the Kuznetsk basin. About 300,000 of the country's 1.2 million miners have joined the strike, which began as a 21-hour walkout March 1.

Moliga warned that miners were "preparing to flood mines" to protest government inaction during their monthlong strike. Flooding now is one method used to close mines.

"We are paying for your helplessness every day," Moliga told the 1,063-member Russian Congress of People's Deputies meeting in the Grand Kremlin Palace. "Why don't you help us?"

Moliga recommended a four-republic commission be formed to negotiate with the striking miners demanding better working and living conditions and a doubling of their wages.

Miners now earn an average of 375 rubles (\$660) per month, about 10 per cent above the national norm.

Miners also have political demands, which vary from region to region. Moliga reiterated the Kuznetsk demands for the resignation of Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev and the election of a new Russian parliament.

Moliga's threat to flood functioning mines came on the fourth day of a special parliamentary session which has been bogged down in a power struggle between reformers led by Russian leader Boris Yeltsin and opponents of his leadership.

Russian Prime Minister Ivan Silayev said in an interview that parliamentary leaders would try to bring to the agenda a vote on a directly elected Russian president, a proposal that Yeltsin supports.

The Congress Friday rejected a call for a vote on a law creating a new Russian presidency, even though more than 77 per cent of Russian voters supported the idea in a March 17 referendum.

Yeltsin is chairman of the congress's smaller, full-time legislature, the Russian Supreme Soviet. It is the highest post in the Russian Federation, the largest of 15 Soviet republics.

Yeltsin has said he would seek election as president, giving him a moral edge over Gorbachev, his political rival, who has never faced direct election by the voters.

"The Russian people voted for a new president, but we see a lot of people here (lawmakers) who would refuse it," said Viktor Mamayev, a liberal and leader of an independent labour union in Moscow. He appealed to his colleagues to "fulfill" the will of the people.

Hardliners seeking to oust Yeltsin demanded in several speeches Sunday that he and his government be investigated for various alleged misdeeds, including putting pressure on conservatives.

Albanians vote in 1st free elections

TIRANA, Albania (AP) — Facing a historic choice between Communist rule and a fast-growing democratic opposition, Albanians turned out in force Sunday for their first multiparty elections since Stalinists seized power in 1944.

Polls opened at 6 a.m. (0500 GMT) under leaden skies in Albania's rundown capital. Red flags bearing the distinctive double-headed eagle symbol of the Shiptars, as the Albanians call themselves, flapped in the wind beside voting stations.

There were indications many voters went to the polls early to elect a 250-seat People's Assembly Parliament.

Sali Berisha, one of the opposition Democratic Party's two main leaders, voted at a polling station of Tirana about two hours after polls opened. By that time, about 530 of that region's 600 registered voters already had cast ballots, election officials said.

Voting in the capital appeared to be taking place in an orderly fashion. Lines outside the nearly empty food stores, a symbol of the Communists' economic failures that have been a main campaign theme of the opposition, were longer than at most polling stations.

Berisha predicted a "total victory" for the Democrats before disappearing behind a flimsy pink curtain to vote.

He emerged grinning and making the Democrats' victor V-sign as dozens of cameras flashed.

"This day is the greatest day in Albania's history," said Gramoz Pashko, the Democrat's other main figure, voting at a station across town. "It's the end of dictatorship, the end of communism."

Communist President Ramiz Alia, who legalised opposition parties in December under pressure from student-led protests, was to cast his ballot near the Blok, Tirana's elite Communist housing district.

Posters at polling stations explained how to vote. Elections officials included members of all political parties.

Polls were to remain open 14 hours, and official results are not expected until at least Tuesday. Seats where no candidate wins a majority will be decided in a runoff election next Sunday.

Tens of thousands of people



Ramiz Alia

rallied in Tirana for the Democrats Friday — the climax of a campaign marked by poor communications, continued Communist domination of the media and unrest fired by widespread misery and discontent.

Alia's government has recently released hundreds of political prisoners. On Saturday, 258 prisoners were set free, said Arben Puto, a leader of Albania's first human rights group. A group of 122 was released under an amnesty on March 17. However, Puto said 27 political prisoners remained in jail.

About 200 Albanians fled to neighbouring Yugoslavia Saturday, the Yugoslav News Agency, Tanjug, reported. Thousands of Albanians have fled their homeland since December, apparently mistrustful of their government's reforms.

Since its founding, the Democratic Party has ridden a wave of anger at decades of Stalinist repression and isolation from the outside world to mount a series of exuberant rallies.

Alia, 66, exuded little of the same outward confidence when he appeared Friday at a news conference and declined to specify whether he would step down if his Party of Labour loses.

However, at a later rally, Alia expressed confidence that his party would triumph and continue to dominate public life, as it has since 1944.

The opposition has complained that the Communists have used their control of security forces to harass Democratic Party candidates and campaigners, particularly in outlying villages.

European parliamentarians complained about Communist domination of the media. "It's not too early to say that the Communists have dominated television and exploited the presence of foreign observers to give respectability to the elections, by showing them trooping in one after the other to pay court to Alia," said Lord Nicholas Bethel, a British Conservative in Tirana with a group of European parliamentarians.

30 Bangladeshi women MPs elected unopposed

DHAKA (R) — The Bangladesh parliament has achieved its full strength of 330 members with the election unopposed of 30 women to reserved seats, the election commission said Sunday.

The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) headed by Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia nominated 28 BNP candidates and two from the fundamentalist Jamaat-E-Islami Party, it said. "All the women nominees were elected to their reserved seats uncontested Saturday," a commission statement said.

Under Bangladeshi election rules, the 300 parliamentarians would have been required to vote if there were more than 30 candidates.

Political sources said the BNP, which won the largest number of

seats in the country's first free elections on Feb. 27, offered Jamaat two seats as a reward for supporting Khaleda.

BNP has 12 seats short of an absolute majority but Jamaat, with 18 seats, promised to back Khaleda.

The elections followed the December resignation of President Hossain Mohammad Ershad, charged with keeping illegal firearms and amassing wealth through corrupt means.

Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina, parliamentary opposition leader, said she would take to the streets if the new government failed to restore a parliamentary system of administration.

Parliament is due to convene on April 5 but the government is already facing problems

Hurd wants to speed up Hong Kong talks

LONDON (R) — British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd wants to hasten what he has called "the snail's pace" of talks with China over the future of Hong Kong when he visits Peking this week.

The five-day trip, which makes Hurd the most senior British minister to visit China since the June 1989 bloodshed in Tiananmen Square, will be a delicate one.

As well as trying to get rid of mutual suspicions between Hong

Kong and Peking, Hurd will try to settle differences over a new airport in the colony which returns to China in 1997.

Also on the agenda will be human rights. "Tiananmen Square has entered our vocabulary as an expression of hope crushed by military force," Hurd wrote in an article last week, referring to the military suppression of pro-democracy protests in Peking in June 1989.

The China visit, the first by a British foreign secretary since Sir Geoffrey Howe in October 1986, follows a row over the status of Tibet's spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama.

China protested about the Dalai Lama's recent visit to Britain, during which he met the Lord Chancellor and Prince Charles, the heir to the throne. Prime Minister John Major, and Hurd refused to see him.

New cases of cholera stir fears in Colombia

BOGOTA (AP) — Detection of new cases of cholera in Colombia has heightened fears of a spread of the disease, which has killed hundreds of people in neighbouring Peru.

Doctors have confirmed the presence of cholera bacteria in 13 Colombians, most of them residents of Tumaco, a port city of more than 100,000 people in southwestern Narino state.

The latest victims include the first Colombian child affected by the disease, a 4-year-old from Tumaco, according to a local hospital report obtained by the Caracol Radio network.

Bogota's La Prensa newspaper reported Saturday that the National Health Institute had received 79 stool samples from other Colombians suspected of contracting cholera, which causes severe diarrhea and vomiting.

Because 30 people with severe diarrhea are under observation in Tumaco's main hospital, more cases of ill illness could be confirmed soon, the hospital report said.

On Friday, the Colombian government declared a medical red alert in the southern regions bordering Ecuador and Peru, two countries affected by the first Latin American epidemic of the cholera in nearly 100 years.

Health Minister Camilo Gonzalez sent a government commission to Tumaco to study new emergency measures to prevent the disease's spread in the region.

On Saturday, however, members of the government committee sent to Tumaco were considering new measures to confront a possible epidemic. Caracol reported. The radio network did not say what steps were contemplated.

Standing behind him is the 300-member Oscar Joel Bryant Foundation, named for the first black LAPD officer killed in the line of duty.

"We believe that during the last 13 years, the chief has provided strong leadership," said Sgt. James Craig, foundation president and 10-year department veteran.

"The opportunity for a black to be promoted in this department is as good as it can be," Craig said. "I believe that there are individuals who have racist attitudes, but racism is not widespread throughout the department."

He added, "obviously, everybody doesn't feel the same way I feel."

Lt. Lyman Doster does. He is a 22-year LAPD veteran and president of the Association of Black Law Enforcement Executives, which represents 15 of the department's 17 blacks who have achieved or surpassed the rank of lieutenant.

"Do I support chief Gates? You're damn right I do," Doster said. "When these calls of Gates being a racist come through, I can't buy it. This is a lynch mob."

Doster said his black colleagues "feel a sense of betrayal and a whole lot of other things," about racist statements made by the white officers who attacked King.

"But I'm not going to make this a black-and-white issue of police brutality," Doster said.

Activists' fears mount over human rights in Hong Kong after 1997

HONG KONG (R) — On the eve of a three-day United Nations Human Rights committee hearing on Hong Kong in New York, activists and lawyers in the British colony voiced fears China's 1997 resumption of sovereignty would remove what protection of basic human rights they presently enjoy.

With China often dispensing criminal justice with a bullet in the back of the head, they said the meetings starting Monday could be the last time the colony's rights record comes under international scrutiny.

Human rights organisations

and lawyers fear international monitoring of rights in the territory will end in 1997 since China is not a signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

"This is the first time in modern history that you have an entire people who will be delivered to the sovereignty of a state which is not a signatory of the ICCPR (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights) and not a democracy as we know it," said Daniel Fung, a leading human rights lawyer.

Lawyers say this gives Peking a free hand legally to invoke draco-

nian provisions still on Hong Kong's statute books but not enforced for many years, such as the death penalty.

The U.N. hearings normally take place every five years but as the next one is scheduled for 1996, one year before the colony becomes part of China, few believe Britain will have any power to influence Peking on the human rights issue by then.

China has been widely criticised for its human rights record, particularly after the Chinese army brutally crushed pro-democracy demonstrations in June, 1989.

Los Angeles' black officers divided over motorist beating

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The latest organisation of black Los Angeles police officers says racism does not exist within the 8,500-member department. But a splinter group of black officers and an outspoken community leader say it does.

The split among the department's 1,300 black members was sparked by the March 3 videotape that shows white officers beating black motorist Rodney King.

Highly publicised racial slurs made by the policemen who beat King have made the incident even more personal to some black Los Angeles officers.

As the King beating continues to simmer under a nationwide spotlight, black officers are stepping forward to say bigotry is alive in the Los Angeles Police Department.

Last week, officer Janine Bouey told of white colleagues leaving a calling card from the Ku Klux Klan on her windshield two years ago. Officer Carl McGill, head of the recently formed African-American Peace Officers Association, said discrimination complaints he has made during a six-year tenure have been ignored or used against him by the department.

"Nobody is acting in our behalf," said McGill, whose association numbers 40 LAPD members, as well as firefighters, sheriff's deputies and other law enforcement officers. "The racist tone is set by individuals who hold key positions. If your superior makes racist remarks, where do you go?"

Danny Bakewell, president of the group Brotherhood Crusade, said he has heard from more than a dozen "absolutely outraged" black officers who are afraid to come forward.

"That outrage is clearly tempered by survival and underscored by fear," Bakewell said. "If they speak out, there will be

clearly focused reprisals."

Brotherhood Crusade is a community activist organisation involved in curbing gang violence and cleaning up inner city neighbourhoods. Bakewell is also involved in efforts to have blacks shop only in black-owned stores in the wake of the shooting death of a black teenager by a Korean grocer.

Four white officers have been indicted on charges of assault with a deadly weapon in the attack on King. The videotape of King being kicked, clubbed and shocked with a 50,000-volt stun gun has been seen by millions of television viewers across the United States.

One of the indicted officers also made racist comments that night, referring to a previous domestic dispute call involving blacks as being "right out of Gorillas in the Mist," a movie about ape research in Africa.

The remarks were contained in publicly released transcripts of patrol car computer messages.

The national uproar created by these incidents highlights a department that prohibited black officers from riding in patrol cars with white colleagues until 1965, more than 10 years after the U.S. Supreme Court outlawed school segregation.

Mayor Tom Bradley, who was the department's first black lieutenant before retiring in 1961, said in an interview last week the King beating presents an opportunity to investigate "constant and continuing" complaints from black officers who say they have been passed over for promotion.

Such complaints resulted in a ruling last year by the California Department of Fair Employment and Housing that the department systematically denied promotions and advancements to black officers.

At the centre of the King furor is police chief Daryl F.

Gates — an outspoken leader who was reprimanded nine years ago by the city police commission for saying blacks may be more susceptible than "normal people" to a now-banned law enforcement chokehold.

The mayor, Bakewell and dozens of other politicians and community leaders have asked Gates to step down. The chief refuses to quit.

Standing behind him is the 300-member Oscar Joel Bryant Foundation, named for the first black LAPD officer killed in the line of duty.

"We believe that during the last 13 years, the chief has provided strong leadership," said Sgt. James Craig, foundation president and 10-year department veteran.

"The opportunity for a black to be promoted in this department is as good as it can be," Craig said. "I believe that there are individuals who have racist attitudes, but racism is not widespread throughout the department."

He added, "obviously, everybody doesn't feel the same way I feel."

Lt. Lyman Doster does. He is a 22-year LAPD veteran and president of the Association of Black Law Enforcement Executives, which represents 15 of the department's 17 blacks who have achieved or surpassed the rank of lieutenant.

"Do I support chief Gates? You're damn right I do," Doster said. "When these calls of Gates being a racist come through, I can't buy it. This is a lynch mob."

Doster said his black colleagues "feel a sense of betrayal and a whole lot of other things," about racist statements made by the white officers who attacked King.

"But I'm not going to make this a black-and-white issue of police brutality," Doster said.

COLUMN

Chrysler chief weds for 3rd time

LOS ANGELES (R) — Lee Iacocca, the chairman of the Chrysler Corporation and one of the most visible figures in the U.S. car industry, has married for the third time. Iacocca, 66, and his 42-year-old bride, Darrien Earle, a Los Angeles restaurateur, were married in the Beverly Hills estate of his friend and former business partner Allen Paulson. The wedding ceremony was a private affair with only close friends and family invited. One of the guests, who declined to be named, said Earle wore a white, chiffon dress. The couple intend to live in Iacocca's Detroit mansion.

Boy invents electric spaghetti fork

LONDON (R) — An 11-year-old British boy has won a £100 (\$175) prize for inventing a rotating electric fork that twirls spaghetti. "I love spaghetti, but like everyone else, I have trouble keeping it on the fork, so I thought my invention would help solve the problem," Matthew Spink said after winning the award at a national inventors' contest.

Computer model of Sphinx hailed

CHICAGO (AP) — The passage of time and hordes of tourists are gradually tearing away at the great Sphinx of Egypt. But computer technology has produced a companion that's impervious to these ravages — a computer model of the 1,500-year-old marvel. It's the most elaborate computer model made for archaeological purposes. "Now that we have a first-class job, we can learn how to skimp on the costs," said Farouk Al Baz, director of Boston University's Centre for Remote Sensing. Mark Lehner of the University of Chicago's Oriental Institute used advanced photography to survey the Sphinx from 1979 to 1983. The photos then were turned into line graphs and an architect loaded the material into a computer to create a model. "You can look at it from any direction — from above, below and from the sides," Lehner said. Archaeologists say that development is important because bad weather, eager tourists, crystallising salt and rising water levels are wearing away at the Sphinx. "It's always best to see something preserved in its original state. But if that can't be done, the next best thing is to put it on paper," said Peter Manuvelian of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.

Katherine Bard, an archaeologist at Boston University, said: "all the monuments in Egypt are going to pieces. This new technology is helping to preserve them."

Man tries to steal police car — with officer inside

NEW YORK (AP) — Transit police officer John Rankin thought he'd seen the city's wildest side after five years of patrolling subways in the south Bronx, one of New York's toughest neighbourhoods. But nothing prepared Rankin for the man who tried to steal the officer's marked patrol car — with his uniformed partner sitting in the passenger seat. "It's the first time this has ever happened," the surprised officer said. Rankin left his partner, Daniel Daly, parked in the brand new white and blue radio car while he dashed into a uniform shop Thursday evening. While he was in the store, "a couple of kids came in, yelling 'the cop needs help,'" said Rankin. He ran outside and found a man on a bicycle leaning through the driver's side window. "I figured he was the guy struggling with my partner," the officer said. Rankin pulled the bicyclist away, only to discover that he was a good Samaritan trying to help Daly, who was struggling with "a guy in the driver's seat" trying to steal my car." The man, later identified as Aundray Burns, 26, was behind the wheel, trying to put the patrol car in gear. Rankin said, "It was rather weird. I thought 'what the hell is going on here? Who is this guy in my seat?'" Rankin said. "I have no idea what was going through his mind." After a brief struggle, the two officers managed to arrest the suspect and pull him from the driver's seat. The officers and Burns were treated and released at a nearby hospital for minor injuries. Burns was charged with attempted robbery, assault and resisting arrest. One thing puzzled Rankin. "It's something I'll never forget," Rankin said. "He didn't even have a license on him."

Thatcher legacy may cloud ruling party's prospects

LONDON (R) — Britain's opposition Labour Party campaigned this weekend for an early general election, scenting its best chance in many years to end Conservative rule.

It says the Conservatives, in power since 1979, are trapped and divided by the unpopular legacies of Margaret Thatcher. Rebel Conservative backbenchers who forced the "iron lady" to resign as premier last November judged that Britons were tired of her autocratic style and abrasively right-wing economic policies.

Successor John Major, behind whom the nation rallied during the Gulf war, cites his own childhood poverty in vowing to make Britain "a classless society."

Yet a recent Gallup poll found that fewer than 20 per cent thought he had made a drastic break with Thatcherism.

Other polls put Conservatives and Labour neck-and-neck in voter esteem. The election must be held before mid-1992.

"In the end," says Giles Radice, a Labour parliamentarian, "Major cannot shrug off the Thatcherite inheritance."

Labour cites an economy mired in deep recession and also the hated poll tax — a levy on every adult, rich and poor, which was imposed by Thatcher to replace

property taxes as the way that Britain would finance its local councils.

The last British head tax provoked the 14th century peasants' revolt. A mob lynched the chancellor of the exchequer.

This one also caused rioting, plus a series of sensational by-election defeats for the government. Major is now going to scrap it in what Labour's leader, Neil Kinnock, says is "the biggest climbdown in modern political history."

In the economic recession, firms have been going bust at a rate of 100 each day.

It is blamed on a credit-fuelled consumer boom in the 1980s which helped Thatcher to win the last election but also created high inflation, forcing a subsequent hike in interest rates.

Major says this credit squeeze is now working. Officials project inflation down at four per cent by year's end from a peak of nearly 11. Interest rates are gradually being lowered.

But several independent economists doubt if the recovery will